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The Concept of *Ḥikmah* in Early Islamic Thought

A thesis presented

by

Hikmet Yaman

to

The Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations

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ABSTRACT

The Concept of *Ḥikmah* and Its Evolution in Early Islamic Thought

Professor Wolfhart P. Heinrichs — Hikmet Yaman

In classical Islamic scholarly disciplines, a thorough knowledge of "technical concepts" is of paramount importance. These terms constitute a highly organized technical system within a complex network of multiple conceptual interrelationships in the cross-disciplinary context of Muslim works. The dissertation examines this situation in the case of the concept of *ḥikmah* (wisdom) in the scholarly sources written during the formative period of the Islamic intellectual fields. The word *ḥikmah* has a wide spectrum of connotations in these texts, as it basically contains all knowledge within human reach, and accordingly, received a range of diverse scholarly treatments. This subtle and elusive notion has not been adequately addressed in western scholarship, nor has its potential contribution to presenting the mentality of earliest Muslim scholars been explored. While the dissertation centers on the notion of *ḥikmah*, it also sheds light on other key epistemological concepts found in the Qur'an, including *'ilm* (knowledge), *ma'rifah* (gnosis), *'aql* (intellect), *qalb* (heart), and *fiqh* (comprehension). It thus contextualizes *ḥikmah* in a nuanced fashion in the collective usage of early Muslim authors.

The dissertation first investigates the lexicographical meanings of *ḥikmah* and analyzes its terminological meanings in the works on the technical vocabulary of Islamic disciplines. It then examines *ḥikmah* in the literatures of Qur'anic exegesis and Sufism, and contextualizes *ḥikmah* within a network of associated concepts. In the particular example of *ḥikmah*, therefore, the dissertation focuses on contextual peculiarities of the technical terms in early Muslim writings and analyzes the relational semantic components of *ḥikmah* in these texts. It also discusses interdisciplinary elements of *ḥikmah* therein deriving information from diverse Muslim intellectual fields. Finally, the dissertation elaborates the earliest Muslim philosophers' reception and conception of philosophy in its particular relation to *ḥikmah* as it is mentioned in the primary authoritative Muslim scriptures.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS vi

INTRODUCTION 1

CHAPTER ONE

Ḥikmah in Early Arabic Lexicography 22

I. 1. The root *ḥ-k-m* and its primary meanings in the Arabic language 25

a. With the basic meaning of *mana'a* "to restrain" 25

b. With the basic meaning of *atqana* "to perfect" 28

c. With the basic meaning of *qaḍā* "to judge" 30

2. *Ḥikmah*, a noun derived from the root *ḥ-k-m* 32

3. The words *ḥakam*, *ḥakīm*, *ḥākim*, *muḥakkam* and *muḥakkim* and their meanings in various contexts 37

II. 1. *Ḥikmah* in *'ulūm al-Qur'ān* literature 42

2. *Ḥikmah* in other types of dictionaries 49

III. Current situation in western scholarship on the meaning of *ḥikmah* 57

CHAPTER TWO

Ḥikmah in Early Muslim Exegetical Literature 66

I. *Ḥikmah* as "much good" 68

II. *Ḥikmah* as a method of calling to the way of the Lord 79

III. *Ḥikmah* as a Divine blessing and grace given to the Prophets in general and to those from Abraham's progeny in particular 81

IV. *Ḥikmah* and authority: the case of David 90

V. *Ḥikmah* and thankfulness: the case of Luqmān 96

VI. *Ḥikmah* as a touchstone or criterion to clarify misconceptions: the case of Jesus 101

VII. *Ḥikmah* as Heavenly grace to the unlettered people: the case of Muḥammad 106

VIII. *Ḥikmah* in relation to *ḥakīm* and *ḥukm* 117

1. *Ḥakīm* 117

2. *Ḥukm* 121

3. Those who were given *ḥukm* 123

CHAPTER THREE

Ḥikmah in Early Sufi Literature 133

I. *Ḥikmah* within a network of concepts in the treatment of the earliest Sufi authorities 141

1. Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī 141

2. Ja'far al-Ṣādiq 144

II. *Ḥikmah* within the contextual formulations of early Sufi exegetical works 154

1. Sufyān al-Thawrī 155

2. Sahl al-Tustarī 157

3. Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī 159

4. Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī 163

5. Abū Isḥāq al-Tha'labī 173

6. 'Abd al-Karīm al-Qushayrī 175

III. *Ḥikmah* within the network of mystical concepts elucidated in early Sufi manuals and treatises 180

1. Al-Hārith al-Muḥāsibī 181

2. Al-Junayd al-Baghdādī 186

3. Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Nūrī 189

4. Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī 202

IV. The merit of *ḥikmah* 228

CHAPTER FOUR

Ḥikmah in Early Philosophical Literature 246

I. The "Five Pillars of *ḥikmah*": *ḥikmah* in the land of Greece 254

II. The fountain of *ḥikmah*: Hermes as "The Father of the *ḥukamā*'" 265

III. Al-Kindī: *ḥikmah* in the view of "The Philosopher of the Arabs" 270

IV. Al-Fārābī: *ḥikmah* in the view of "The Second Master" 289

V. Ibn Sīnā: *ḥikmah* in the view of "The Head-Master" 308

CONCLUSION 329

BIBLIOGRAPHY 336

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INTRODUCTION

Analyzing "technical concepts" in early Muslim writings is a matter of extreme difficulty and delicacy. A scholarly attempt to examine critically and comprehend individual terms in an atomistic manner often results in failure, because these terms do not stand in isolation from other related and complementary concepts in these texts; rather, they constitute a highly organized technical system within a complex network of multiple conceptual interrelationships in the cross-disciplinary context of early Muslim scholarly works. Concentrating merely on etymology or original word meanings to fix and define precisely the meanings of words does not help satisfactorily either, because context has a decisive impact on the vocabulary being used. One of the most evident examples of this situation manifests itself in the case of *ḥikmah*. An examination of the concept of *ḥikmah* in the scholarly sources written during the formative period of the Islamic intellectual disciplines reveals a wide-ranging semantic complexity. The word itself has a wide spectrum of connotations in these texts, as *ḥikmah* basically contains all knowledge within human reach. It has a pivotal role across the spectrum of Islamic disciplines, and accordingly, received a range of diverse scholarly treatments and became a subtle notion requiring careful attention to its contextual and interdisciplinary elements in the texts.

This dissertation will investigate the concept of *ḥikmah* in the cross-disciplinary context of early Muslim scholarly works, mainly in the literatures of Arabic lexicography, Qur'anic exegesis, Sufism, and Islamic philosophy.[1] The primary textual

[1] A more comprehensive scholarly analysis of *ḥikmah* in wide-ranging Muslim scholarship would be expected to discuss *ḥikmah* in early legal (*fiqhī*), theological (*kalāmī*), and ethical (*akhlāqī*) works as well.

investigation will principally be limited to works written up to the time of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111). While the dissertation will center on the notion of *ḥikmah*, it will also shed light on other key epistemological concepts found in the Qur'an, such as *'ilm* (knowledge), *ma'rifah* (gnosis), *'aql* (intellect), *qalb* (heart), and *fiqh* (comprehension), to which *ḥikmah* is intrinsically related. The dissertation will, therefore, contextualize *ḥikmah* in a more nuanced fashion in the collective usage of early Muslim authors. No other study in modern scholarship has offered an examination of the concept of *ḥikmah* in this capacity. To this end, I will first investigate the meanings of *ḥikmah* based on lexicographical materials attesting to the primary meanings of this word during pre- and early Islamic times. Arabic lexicographers present a relatively expansive compendium of definitions for *ḥikmah* and discuss the semantic permutations of its root *ḥ-k-m*.

The Arabic word *ḥikmah* is a noun derived from the root *ḥ-k-m* whose primary meaning is "to restrain" (*mana'a*). One of the earliest concrete usages of this root can be attested to the expression *ḥakamat al-lijām* (bit of a beast's bridle), from which other abstract usages seem to be derived metaphorically. The restraint in question could be from injustice (*ẓulm*), ignorance (*jahl*), or foolishness (*safah*), and accordingly, *ḥikmah*

I will include *ḥikmah* as an ethical concept in the context of my philosophical discussions on *ḥikmah*. As for the concept of *ḥikmah* in *fiqh* and *kalām*, even though my plan in the initial stages of the dissertation was to assign separate chapters to the analysis of *ḥikmah* in these two fields as well, after having done the preliminary research with this idea in mind, I came to the conclusion that it would be a more realistic project if I addressed *ḥikmah* in *fiqh* and *kalām* literatures in separate studies in detail after the dissertation. To say the least, Muslim theologians explain *ḥikmah* in the context of their discussions on the purpose of the creation (*ḥikmah takwīniyyah*) and relate it to other associated concepts such as *ghāyah* (objective), *niẓām* ([divine] organization), *gharaḍ* (purpose), and *maqṣad* (intention). See, for instance, Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī, *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, ed. Bekir Topaloğlu and Muhammed Aruci (Istanbul, 2003): 151-158, and Abū Ḥāmid, al-Ghazālī, *al-Ḥikmah fī-makhlūqāt Allāh 'Azzah wa-Jallah*, in *Majmū'ah Rasā'il al-Imām al-Ghazālī* (Beirut, 1996): 7-46. In Islamic legal works, the *ḥikmah* is elaborated in the context of the purpose of legislation (*ḥikmah tashrī'iyyah*) and related to other concepts in this regard, including *'illah* (effective cause, or *ratio legis*, or a particular ruling), *sabab* (cause), *maṣlaḥah* (considerations of public interest), and *maqāṣid* (goals and objectives). For further details see, Zakī al-Dīn Sha'bān, *Uṣūl al-Fiqh al-Islāmī* (Beirut, 1974): 136-58.

can be defined as justice (*'adl*), knowledge (*'ilm*), or forbearance (*ḥilm*), respectively. In this context, everything that prevents a person from acting in a corrupt manner or from committing a blameworthy deed can be described by the verbs derived from the root *ḥ-k-m*, i.e., *ḥakama*, *ḥakkama*, or *aḥkama*. *Ḥikmah*, therefore, has epistemological as well as practical components, as Ibn Qutaybah (d. 276/889) says, "*Ḥikmah* denotes knowledge and practice; a man is not called *ḥakīm* unless he combines the two (*al-ḥikmatu al-'ilmu wa-al-'amalu, lā yusammā al-rajulu ḥakīman ḥattā yajma'ahumā*)."[2] According to Arabic lexicographers, the root *h-k-m* has two other basic meanings: "to perfect" (*atqana*), particularly in the fourth form (*aḥkama*), and "to judge", especially in the first form (*ḥakama*).

The dissertation will also address the scholarly discussions in the West on the very basic meanings of the root *ḥ-k-m* in its specific relation to the idea of "wisdom". Some scholars – including Josef Horovitz, Arthur Jefferry, and Franz Rosenthal – argue that this root in the Arabic language expresses primarily juridical and administrative activity, as opposed to its use in other Semitic languages where it had long ago denoted the notion of "wisdom."[3] According to their argument, the Arabic words *ḥikmah* and *ḥakīm*, in the sense of "wisdom" and "wise" respectively, owe their origin to foreign influence. Throughout the dissertation, I do not completely reject this possibility for two simple reasons: first, I will not examine the original meaning(s) of the root *ḥ-k-m* in the context of comparative Semitic languages; and second, for the time being, we do not

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[2] Ibn Qutaybah, *Tafsīr gharīb al-Qur'ān*, ed. Aḥmad Ṣaqr (Cairo, 1958): 32.

[3] See, for instance, Josef Horovitz, *Koranische Untersuchungen* (Berlin and Leipzig, 1926): 72; Arthur Jefferry, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'an* (Lahore, 1977): 111; Franz Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971): 37.

possess sufficient authentic physical texts in ancient pre-Islamic Arabic to prove or disprove this argument. Our current knowledge of the subject matter is based on younger pre-Islamic linguistic materials, primarily poetry, that have survived to our day; unfortunately, however, these documents do not help us in a satisfactory manner, because they do not include ample attestations (*shawāhid*) for the word *ḥikmah* sufficient to lead us to comprehensive conclusions.

Acknowledging this apparently unpromising situation in the field, the dissertation will nevertheless explore the possibility that during pre- and early Islamic times whether the meanings of the root *ḥ-k-m* is related to the idea of "wisdom" in the Arabic language, and whether Arabic lexicographers provided enough materials to guide us to a promising direction. The existence of pre-Islamic Arabic gnomic literature (*ḥikam*/*ḥikmiyyāt*) and sages (*ḥukamā' al-'Arab*), including famous Luqmān b. 'Ād, whose wise sayings were in circulation in the pre-Islamic Arab society will also be taken into consideration in reaching a concrete solution regarding the historical background of the words *ḥikmah* and *ḥakīm*, and their utilization in the Arabic language before the rise of Islam. As far as the original meaning of *ḥikmah* in the sense of "wisdom" in ancient pre-Islamic Arabic in comparison with other Semitic languages is concerned, the dissertation introduces a tentative argument. Considering the limited amount of the presently extant philological materials, it does not exclude the possibility that *ḥikmah* in the sense of "wisdom" might well have entered into Arabic in this meaning from other Semitic languages and in time become an indigenous word in this language. But, again, the topic in the context of comparative Semitic studies lies beyond the scope of the dissertation.

By focusing on primary lexicographical materials, therefore, I will investigate the meanings of the Arabic root *ḥ-k-m* with a special attention to *ḥikmah*. To this end, in addition to lexicographical works in the technical sense of the word, I will use more specialized dictionaries oriented mainly towards Qur'anic vocabulary and terminology. In this regard, I will examine this topic in the writings of Muqātil b. Sulaymān (d. 150/767),[4] Yaḥyā b. Sallām (d. 200/815),[5] al-Rāhgib al-Iṣfahānī (d. 502/1108),[6] as well as of Abū Hilāl al-'Askarī (d. 389/993),[7] al-Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī (d. 816/1413),[8] and al-Tahānawī (d. 1185/1745).[9] I will also discuss related arguments in secondary sources in western languages, especially in the writings of Rosenthal and Dimitri Gutas. In the latter case, for instance, I will show examples of how if one does not pay sufficient attention to the contextual and interdisciplinary peculiarities of *ḥikmah* across the spectrum of Islamic scholarly disciplines, one can easily draw misleading conclusions regarding it as a concept.

The word *ḥikmah* occurs twenty times in the Qur'an and in half of these it is coupled with the word *kitāb* (book). This combination leads the earliest Muslim commentators of the Qur'an to think that *ḥikmah* is closely related to the divine revelation in the form of revealed books or prophetic practice (*sunnah*), being an extension and practice of this revelation. Early *tafsīr* authorities put a specific emphasis

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[4] Muqātil b. Sulaymān, *Kitāb al-wujūh wa-al-naẓā'ir*, ed. Ali Özek (Istanbul, 1993).

[5] Yaḥyā b. Sallām, *al-Taṣārīf*, ed. Hind Shiblī (Tunis, 1979).

[6] Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī *Mufradāt alfāẓ al-Qur'ān*, ed. Ṣafwān 'Adnān Dāwūdī (Damascus, 1992).

[7] Abū Hilāl al-'Askarī, *al-Furūq al-lughawiyyah*, ed. Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Salīm (Cairo, 1998).

[8] Al-Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī, *al-Ta'rīfāt*, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān 'Umayrah (Beirut, 1987).

[9] Al-Tahānawī, *Kashshāf iṣṭilāḥāt al-funūn* (Istanbul, 1900).

on the practical aspect of *ḥikmah* and argue that there is a causal relationship between sincere piety and being given *ḥikmah*, as attested to the hadith, "Whoever worships God sincerely for forty days, the springs of *ḥikmah* gush out from his heart to his tongue."[10]

According to the Qur'an, God is the ultimate possessor of *ḥikmah*. He is called *al-Ḥakīm*, one of the Most Beautiful Names of God (*al-asmā' al-ḥusnā*). But He grants His distinguished servants with this preferential gift as well. The Qur'an states that God has given *ḥikmah* to the Prophets in general (3:81) and to the ones from Abraham's progeny (4:54) – including David (2:251, 38:20), Jesus (3:48, 5:110, 43:63), and Muḥammad (2:151, 3:164, 4:113, 17:39) – in particular. In addition to these prophets, in a general framework, the Qur'an says that God gives *ḥikmah* to whomever He wills and that those who are given *ḥikmah* have indeed been given much good (2:269). The ideal personification of this latter is Luqmān, who is not typically regarded in early Muslim writings as a prophet in the technical sense of the word, but is seen as a pious and upright person who has enjoyed *ḥikmah* (31:12). Yet within such a seemingly simple framework, *ḥikmah* received diverse interpretations by early commentators of the Qur'an as we shall see.

In the dissertation, I will examine their arguments and discuss whether this diversity in expositions is of an inclusive and complementary or exclusive and contradictory nature. To be able to present a clearer picture, I will analyze the word *ḥikmah* in each Qur'anic instance within its own context using related exegetical discussions provided by early Muslim commentators. I will also group the Qur'anic verses in which *ḥikmah* appears according to their context. I believe that such a

[10] Quoted in al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manthūr fī al-tafsīr al-ma'thūr* (Beirut, 1983) II: 69.

contextual approach to these verses will enable us to see *ḥikmah* more clearly together with its relational semantic components. I will then discuss the diverse interpretations of *ḥikmah*, the possibility of giving a single-word definition of the word throughout the Qur'anic text, and whether or not multiple meanings provided by early commentators refer to a kind of inconsistency or contradiction among various understandings. I will discuss this diversity in expositions in light of a Prophetic statement reported by Ibn 'Aṭiyyah (d. 543/1148) reading, "One cannot reach comprehension completely until he discerns in the Qur'an numerous dimensions (*lā yafqahu al-rajulu kulla al-fiqhi ḥattā yarā li-al-qur'āni wujūhan kathīratan*)."[11] In this regard, I will focus particularly on the interpretations coming from the earliest *tafsīr* authorities, including Ibn 'Abbās (d. 68/687), Ibrāhīm al-Nakhā'ī (d. 95/714), Mujāhid (d. 104/722), al-Ḍaḥḥāk (d. 106/723), and Qatādah (d. 118/736), who define *ḥikmah* variously, ranging from "hitting upon the truth in speech and action (*al-iṣābah fi al-qawl wa-al-fi'il*)", "knowledge of the religion (*al-'ilm bi-al-dīn*)", "comprehension (*fiqh*)", "intellect (*'aql*)", "understanding (*fahm*)", to "moral scrupulousness (*wara'*)". It is my hope that this methodology will enable us to follow the roots and logic in the writings of early Muslim scholars in reference to relating their arguments to the Qur'anic statements.

As far as western scholars' take on *ḥikmah* is concerned, it is surprising that there is no comprehensive study in modern scholarship analyzing the diverse employments of *ḥikmah* in the Qur'an. Rosenthal and Gutas' works may be considered the one exception to this general lack of sufficient scholarly interest in *ḥikmah*. However, the former mentions *ḥikmah* merely insofar as it is related to the concept of *'ilm* and analyzes

[11] Abū Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Ḥaqq b. 'Aṭiyyah, *al-Muḥarrar al-wajīz fī tafsīr al-Kitāb al-'Azīz*, ed. Aḥmad Ṣādiq al-Mallāḥ (Cairo, 1974) I: 44-45.

ḥikmah in light of the Judaeo-Christian distinction between "knowledge" and "wisdom", rather than treating it in its indigenous Qur'anic setting.[12] The latter, on the other hand, tends to assign a fixed single meaning to *ḥikmah* throughout the Qur'an, and this tendency leads to a rigidity in interpreting the related Qur'anic statements, without paying attention to the contextual peculiarities of the verses in which *ḥikmah* occurs. In this regard, I will discuss the consistency of Gutas' insistent definition of *ḥikmah* throughout the entire Qur'anic text as "maxim" and revisit the texts upon which he bases his arguments.[13]

In some Qur'anic instances, the word *ḥukm* is used, apparently, in the same sense as *ḥikmah*. In three cases, this *ḥukm* is also paired with *kitāb* (3:79, 6:89, 45:16). The Qur'an, furthermore, mentions the names of the Prophets Lot, Joseph, Moses, Solomon, and John (the Baptist) as having been given *ḥukm*. Rosenthal argues that this *ḥukm* indicates worldly authority.[14] I will evaluate the comprehensiveness of this argument in light of the historical fact that not all these Prophets, especially Lot and John, were reputed to have possessed temporal authority.

The difficulty of analyzing "technical concepts" in general and *ḥikmah* in particular in early Muslim writings increases even further in the case of the early Sufi textual corpus. Here, most of the constituent works have been lost forever in their original forms and only a small percentage of them are in print. A scholarly attempt to present a concrete historical background of Sufi epistemological concepts with a

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[12] Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant*, 35-40.

[13] Dimitri Gutas, "Classical Arabic Wisdom Literature: Nature and Scope," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 101.1 (1981): 49-86.

[14] Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant*, 38.

particular focus on *ḥikmah* does not necessarily result in success in a satisfactory manner. One might think that a meticulous, systematic, historical and textual investigation of early Sufi works would provide a clear picture of the semantic continuities, shifts, and innovations in meaning of these fundamental concepts. But the deeper one digs in these texts, the clearer one sees the impenetrable nature of the subject matter. One might be able to write the histories of some usages of certain concepts in the arguments available in a number of texts, but how could one write their histories within the entire context of the early Sufi textual corpus? Rather than dealing with it as an individual term in an atomistic manner, a more feasible project would then be an examination of the notion of *ḥikmah* in early mystical works as an element in a network of related concepts.

Another difficulty in examining early Sufi terms and their semantic alterations throughout their history is that the definition and elucidation of many doctrines and concepts are only found in later authors such as al-Sarrāj (d. 378/988), al-Kalābādhī (d. 380/990), al-Makkī (d. 386/996), Abū Nu'aym (d. 430/1039), al-Hujwīrī (d. *ca.* 465/1072), and 'Aṭṭār (d. *ca.* 627/1229). These writers naturally use the language and terminology of their own times. Their categories are drawn in terms of contemporaneous linguistic conventions rather than those held by the original Sufi thinkers. Such an anachronistic, and to some extent, nostalgic reading of Sufi historical figures and concepts can possibly mislead the reader in his request for a proper understanding of the points in question.

Facing such textual and methodological difficulties, nevertheless, I will investigate *ḥikmah* in early Sufi writings in which it occurs in the context of these texts' epistemological constructs, mainly in relation to *'ilm*, *ma'rifah*, *'aql*, *qalb* and *fiqh*. In

addition, these sources treat *ḥikmah* as a practical or applied concept in such a manner that without this aspect, they argue, *ḥikmah* cannot be understood and actualized properly. Of the earliest authoritative Sufi writings, I will examine those of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728) and Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765) with a special attention to their elaboration of *ḥikmah* within a network of associated concepts. Then I will focus on *ḥikmah* within the contextual formulations of early Sufi exegetical works, including those of al-Thawrī (d. 161/778), al-Tustarī (d. 283/896), al-Sulamī (d. 412/1021), al-Tha'labī (d. 427/1035) and al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1074). I will also contextualize *ḥikmah* within the organized totality of mystical concepts elucidated in early Sufi manuals and treatises, primarily those of al-Muḥāsibī (d. 243/857), al-Junayd (d. 298/910), al-Nūrī (d. 295/907), al-Tirmidhī (d. *ca.* 300/912), and al-Makkī (d. 386/996). Throughout my investigation in the writings of these authors, I will attempt to elucidate the modes of perception and inner formative forces of the early Muslim spiritual authorities as they are recorded in the scholarly sources. I will also discuss the merit of *ḥikmah* in these writings and the ways that they explicate to attain this preferential notion.

A number of contemporary scholars – including Louis Massignon, Paul Nwyia, Süleyman Ateş, Gerhard Böwering and Bernd Radtke – have studied early Sufi thought and concepts, but none of them are particularly interested in *ḥikmah*. Massignon has contributed widely to the study of early Muslim mystics. His works have decisively influenced the course of academic studies on the origins of Sufi terms in the western academic world.[15] I agree with Massignon that Sufism and its terminology are not

[15] In addition to Massignon's substantial studies on al-Ḥallāj (d. 304/922), I am especially referring in this context to his works *Essai sur les origines du lexique technique de la mystique musulmane* (Paris, 1968) and *Recueil de textes inédits concernant l'histoire de la mystique en pays d'islam* (Paris, 1929).

imported from outside but based on the Qur'an and thus indigenous to Islam. I believe that the Qur'an functioned as the principle source of contemplation and inspiration for the earliest ascetics and gnostically-minded Muslims, though in the course of its later flourishing some foreign ideas and concepts may well have infiltrated Sufism. Throughout my investigation of *ḥikmah* and other related concepts, it is my hope that I will augment further Massignon's discussions regarding this question in early Sufism.

In early Sufi texts, *ḥikmah* emerges as an elusive term which can be defined in English as "wisdom", "sagacity", "rationale", "underlying reason", "knowledge" or "mystic aphorism" depending on the context. To be able to analyze *ḥikmah* and its Qur'anic conceptualizations by early Sufi writers, I will first examine these writers' exegetical presentations of the topic. To this end, my earliest sources will be the fragments of Qur'anic commentary attributed to authors of the 2nd/8th century who are mentioned by the Sufi tradition as the forefathers of Sufi *tafsīr*, such as al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, and Sufyān al-Thawrī.

These authors and their followers in Sufi exegesis of the Qur'an (*al-tafsīr al-ishārī* or *al-fayḍī*) record interpretations of Qur'anic verses relying on unveilings (*mukāshafāt*) experienced by themselves as well as by other early masters of Sufism. They argue that for each statement in the Qur'an, in addition to the literal, outward or exoteric (*ẓāhir*) meaning, there is an inward or esoteric (*bāṭin*) sense. This inward meaning is born in the heart of the gnostic (*'ārif*) in the process of spiritual practice and enlightenment. Sufi commentators do not claim that their interpretations are the only correct explanations. Instead, in their epistemological theories, they generally embrace a specific method that describes knowledge in an individualistic, experiential and

existential manner. On the basis of their peculiar conception of an ontological hierarchy of existence, which postulates a distinct subject-object relationship than we are conventionally accustomed to in this-worldly conditions, they introduce a particular balance between ontology and epistemology. According to this epistemological theory, different explanations for the same object at different stages of the mystical path are quite possible, but in reality, they argue, this occurs in a concentric manner. Sufi masters note that distinguished advanced Sufis are aware of this fact and they repeatedly underscore that there is no contradiction between the epistemological products of different levels of this hierarchy. Rather, they assert this happens in a complementary manner, or in other words, every esoteric or inward explanation springs from exoteric or outward statements that are found in authoritative religious sources. Mystical writers, at the same time, accept that such a theory may lead people who are not familiar with these notions to take mystical expositions presented by the Sufis as incoherent and confusing. Acknowledging this possibility, Sufis assert that such a peculiar theory of knowledge ultimately considers knowledge to be a form of individual "taste" or "intuitive perception" (*dhawq*) which can actually neither be tested by nor described to others, let alone by them.

This unconventional epistemological theory, however, does not justify arbitrary and baseless interpretations. Sufi masters set general principles for a proper mystical commentary as follows: 1) The inner meaning posited for a Qur'anic statement should not be contradictory to the external sense of that passage; 2) There should be an additional supporting attestation (*shāhid*) from corroborative texts to justify such an interpretation; 3) There should not be any obvious religious law or basic rational

principle opposing it; and 4) Such an interpretation should not be presented as the only meaning of that statement.[16]

Al-Makkī applies this methodology in the particular case of *ḥikmah*. He states that there is a subtle balance between the *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin* dimensions of *ḥikmah* which indicates their delicate instinctive correlation. He underscores that in the view of Sufis, God possesses the attributes of power (*qudrah*) and *ḥikmah* at the same time; He makes things available or visible (*aẓhara al-ashyā'*) out of His attribute of *qudrah* and He regulates things according to His *ḥikmah*. A person who trusts in God thoroughly (*mutawakkil*) does not fall into error regarding affirmation of His *ḥikmah*, because of what he sees in the world as a result of God's *qudrah*. These two attributes (*qudrah* and *ḥikmah*) operate in a very subtle way. Even though there might be situations in which *qudrah* and *ḥikmah* seem to be contradictory to each other, according to Sufis, this is only an outward appearance. In reality, the two function complementarily to each other in perfect harmony. A *mutawakkil*, therefore, without being distracted by seemingly unpleasant occurrences in this world, should unfailingly keep this fundamental inner balance in his mind in the course of his religious life, for believing in fate (*qadar*) includes the essential principle that both good (*khayr*) and evil (*sharr*) are created by God Who is All-powerful (*qādir*) and All-*ḥakīm* at the same time.[17]

In the writings of early Sufi masters, *ḥikmah* is positioned between practical (*'amalī*) and epistemological (*'ilmī*) concepts. As can be attested to the elaborations of al-Qushayrī, *ḥikmah* is treated as a central point connected inherently with *taqwā* (God-

[16] Süleyman Ateş, *İşārī Tefsīr Okulu* (Ankara, 1974): 19-21; Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr wa-al-mufassirūn* (Cairo, 1976) II : 377.

[17] Abū Ṭālib Al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, ed. Sa'īd Nasīb Makārim (Beirut, 1995) II: 23-24.

fearingness/God-consciousness), *zuhd* (asceticism), *wara'* (moral scrupulousness), *akhlāq* (good morals) and *'ibādāt* (acts of worship), on the one hand, and with *ilhām* (inspiration), *kashf* (unveiling), *ma'rifah* (gnosis), *sirr* (secret) and *haqīqah* (reality) on the other. Practical notions are starting points without which one cannot reap the epistemological fruits. In other words, it is practical notions that give birth to epistemological results. In testimony to this fundamental point, al-Qushayrī reports, "When the servant renounces (*zahada*) this world, God entrusts [him to] an angel who implants *ḥikmah* in his heart."[18] The two groups of these concepts together constitute in an existential manner the final destinations of Muslim spirituality, which is *tawḥīd*, i.e., declaring God's unity.

A more sophisticated definition of *ḥikmah* emerges in the writings of al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (d. *ca.* 300/912), on the basis of whose title, *al-Ḥakīm*, some contemporary scholars associate him with philosophy, especially of the Hellenistic type.[19] I will briefly discuss the consistency of this association on the basis of both classical Sufi sources and related modern scholarship, and then examine al-Tirmidhī's own conception of *ḥikmah* in order to give a clearer picture of the matter.

However, al-Tirmidhī himself does not seem to be willing to help his readers understand clearly his statements, but instead appears to be intentionally trying to confuse their mind by throwing terminological sand in their eyes. As a result of this, those who

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[18] 'Abd al-Karīm al-Qushayrī, *al-Risālah* (Egypt, 1959): 62.

[19] See, for instance, Massignon, *Essai*, 286-287 and *Recueil*, 33; and Yves Marquet, "al-Tirmidhī" in *EI²*. Massignon calls al-Tirmidhī "a theoretician" who, throughout his psychological expositions, is inclined towards a kabbala of the letters of scripture. Massignon, *Essai*, 293. In his work, *al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī et le néoplatonisme de son temps*, Marquet examines al-Tirmidhī's ideas against the background of Plato, the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā and al-Farābī's philosophies. He also compares al-Tirmidhī's theories to ancient Greek and Chinese thought. Yves Marquet, *al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī et le néoplatonisme de son temps* (Université de Dakar, 1976).

attempt to apply conventional analytical scholarly methods to al-Tirmidhī's writings to conceptualize and systematize them find their author an intimidating elucidator, if not obscurantist, because throughout his expositions, he does not hold the same categorical elucidation of *ḥikmah*. He continually introduces new categories, assumingly depending on the spiritual stational perspective (*maqām*) in question. Al-Tirmidhī himself seems to be aware of this situation, as he expresses that he did not compose anything following conventional methods of writing; rather, he states, every single thing that he composed was a result of the moment (*waqt*) that prevailed over him at that time. He understands *ḥikmah* as the core of esoteric knowledge coming from *ma'rifah*, as opposed to ordinary outward knowledge (*'ilm*). In this context, *ḥikmah* is not equal to *ma'rifah*, but rather is only an initial rank of *ma'rifah*. In other words, this *ḥikmah* is the first step in the process of transition from exoteric knowledge to esoteric knowledge. In his view, unlike *'ilm*, which can be acquired through conventional learning, *ḥikmah* can only be attained as a result of an existential and experiential training of the soul. Yet this process does not have a deterministic nature of causality, since *ḥikmah*, in the final analysis, is a gift from God. On this general ground, al-Tirmidhī elaborates further gradational explanations of *ḥikmah* in accordance with the *maqam* in question, and not only does he define *ḥikmah* variously depending on the context, he also talk about levels of meaning for the concept. Possessing *al-ḥikmah al-'ulyā* (the highest or supreme *ḥikmah*), for instance, is a distinguishing characteristic of the real friends of God (*awliyā'*), while ordinary people may possess *al-hikmah al-maḥdūdah* (the limited *ḥikmah*). The former belongs only to the prophets and eminent saints, and is also called *ḥikmat al-ḥikmah* (the *ḥikmah* of the *ḥikmah* or the real *ḥikmah*), which al-Tirmidhī connects to the Qur'anic notion of "the

most firm handle (*al-'urwah al-wuthqā*)" (2:256).[20] In his terminology, *al-ḥikmah al-'ulyā* comprises the principles (*uṣūl*) of *ḥikmah* and embodies the knowledge of the beginning (*'ilm al-bad'*), of the primordial covenant/pact (*'ilm al-mīthāq*), of the measures (*'ilm al-maqādīr*), and of letters (*'ilm al-ḥurūf*). This knowledge is revealed only to the distinguished (*kubarā'*) among the saints and other saints take it from them unquestioningly.[21] What appears from al-Tirmidhī's writings, then, he uses *ḥikmah* as a multivalent or polysemous term that contains simultaneously several meanings as well as different levels of meaning.

In the view of Sufis, *ḥikmah* is a very precious thing and is not given to anybody on the basis of his family, social standing, wealth or physical qualities. Rather God gives *ḥikmah* to his distinguished servants like Luqmān. In order to attain *ḥikmah*, a person must prepare himself for it through obligatory and supererogatory acts of worship indispensable to a decent spiritual life, but even then there is no guarantee that he will acquire this notion at the end of his personal efforts, because there is no deterministic relationship between *ḥikmah* and personal efforts. Sufi master also note that even though *ḥikmah* cannot be attained merely through personal strivings, those who have attained it have in all cases, followed such meticulous spiritual practice.

According to Muslim mystics, as much as *ḥikmah* is a magnificent heavenly gift given to only a small number of distinguished people, it is also an immense responsibility placed on their shoulders. Those who have been given *ḥikmah* ought to speak and act scrupulously in accord with this exclusive treatment, for they are expected to prove the

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[20] Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Kitāb khatm al-awliyā'*, ed. 'Uthmān Yaḥyā (Beirut, 1965): 381.

[21] Ibid., 362.

truth and sincerity of their words by means of actions. They may not be excused for certain small mistakes for which ordinary people might normally be pardoned. This scrupulousness also requires that they should not give *ḥikmah* to undeserving people, who might misunderstand and misrepresent it.

The idea of treating *ḥikmah* as a very high degree of knowledge that should not be improperly divulged to undeserving or uninitiated persons can be attested also to the writings of early Muslim philosophers, who use the words "*ḥikmah*" and "philosophy" interchangeably and relate the origin of this knowledge further to prophetic teachings. The figure of Luqmān as the ideal personification of *ḥikmah* is recurrently recorded in Islamic philosophical writings as well. In comparison with the concept of prophethood in technical sense, early Muslim intellectuals explain their conception of *ḥikmah* saying that God gave prophethood to distinguished individuals among the people of purity and closed the doors of this institution with the Prophet Muḥammad. As for *ḥikmah* alone, their argument is that God had given it to Luqmān and since then He has kept its door unreservedly open until the Day of Resurrection. Knowledge of *ḥikmah*, therefore, represents for them knowledge of the true nature of things and derives from the prophetic institution by way of Luqmān and David. The earliest Greek philosophers – "The Five Pillars of *ḥikmah* (*asātīn al-ḥikmah al-khamsah*)", namely, Empedocles, Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle in succession – learned this *ḥikmah* from Luqmān and David and elaborated it further. In this regard, Muslim historians record another figure as a main channel of *ḥikmah*. This is Hermes, "The Father of Sages (*abū al-ḥukamā*)". He is an enigmatic key figure with respect to the historical contact between religion and philosophy, for historians identify him recurrently with the Qur'anic Idrīs. Providing a

historical religious background for the ancient philosophical personalities facilitated the integration of Greek philosophy into the Islamic world-view, for Muslims would regard this intellectual heritage within their extended prophetic tradition.

The Qur'anic notion of *ḥikmah* is a highly influential inner formative force that caused Muslim intellectuals to become interested in Greek philosophy and its leading figures. Ibn Sīnā, for instance, in the context of explaining his perception of philosophy, clearly refers to the Qur'anic verse 2:269, in which those who are given *ḥikmah* are characterized as being given much good.[22] Early Muslim philosophers (*falāsifah*) regarded their philosophical inquiry as the continuation of the everlasting search of humankind for truth in general and for the true knowledge of God in particular.[23] This universal and undying character of philosophical truth was the most attractive dimension of philosophical activities to them. They envisioned and situated themselves as the representatives of this intellectual tradition in their own times. In their inquiries, the *falāsifah* thought that their efforts to attain such a sublime truth were in harmony with the Qur'anic notion of *ḥikmah*, the search for which, moreover, was strongly recommended by the Prophet by any decent means possible. They did not view philosophy as idle speculation or the mere exercising of thought; but rather, considered it to be (Islamic) *ḥikmah* that requires them to complete their words with their actions, as al-Kindī (d. *ca.* 260/873) says,

> the aim (*gharaḍ*) of the philosopher is, with respect to his knowledge, to attain the truth (*iṣābat al-ḥaqq*), and with respect to his action, to act truthfully (*al-'amal bi-al-ḥaqq*).[24]

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[22] Ibn Sīnā, *'Uyūn al-ḥikmah*, ed. Muwaffak F. al-Jabr (Damascus, 1996): 64.

[23] Ibn Sīnā, for instance, uses the word *ḥikmah* in the sense of metaphysics and defines it as "the best knowledge of the best thing known". In his terminology, this *ḥikmah* is knowledge that yields certainty (*yaqīn*) of God. Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā: al-Ilāhiyyāt*, eds. Georges Anawātī, et al. (Cairo, 1960): 15.

[24] Al-Kindī, *Rasā'il al-Kindī al-falsafiyyah*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Hādī Abū Rīdah (Cairo, 1950): 97.

According to Muslim thinkers, attaining this *ḥikmah* was the most prestigious achievement of mankind irrespective of ethnic or religious background. From this perspective, they do not ascribe *falsafah* to a particular prophetic tradition and are not talking about a distinctively Islamic – as opposed to Christian or Jewish – philosophy, but only about a philosophy of humankind. I think that this point is of paramount importance to contemporary studies on Islamic philosophy, especially with respect to designating it exclusively as "Arabic" or "Islamic".[25] The dissertation will provide further textual bases to have a better understanding of this issue. To give an example, al-Kindī depicts his conception of philosophy as *ḥikmah* and his perception of the history of philosophy as a search for universal truth. He pictures this history as a cooperative and cumulative tradition; he further sees it as a progressive process of intellectualizing eternal truth, which is *ḥikmah* again. Without undervaluing their attempts, he gratefully appreciates the efforts of all previous philosophers to attain this truth, regardless of their being major or minor, sufficient or deficient in reaching truth, and regardless of the ethnicity of the thinker. He expresses his position in this regard saying,

> We must not be ashamed of appreciating the truth and of acquiring it wherever it comes from, even if it comes from races remote (*al-ajnās al-qāsiyah*) and nations different from (*al-umam al-mubāyanah*) us. For the seeker of truth, nothing is dearer than the truth itself, and there must not be any disparagement of the truth, nor belittling either of one who speaks it or of one who conveys it. No one is [ever] diminished by the truth; on the contrary, everything is ennobled by the truth itself.[26]

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[25] In this context, I am referring especially to Gutas' reading of history of Islamic philosophy and his criticism of the writings of Corbin and Nasr in this relation. See Gutas, "The Study of Arabic Philosophy in the Twentieth Century: An Essay on the Historiography of Arabic Philosophy" *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 29.1 (2002).

[26] Al-Kindī, 103.

Al-Kindī, thus, holds each of those attempts as a contribution to the intellectual advancement of mankind and as an instrument leading further knowledge of the real nature of things. At the same time, just as his followers on this path, al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā, al-Kindī does not see himself as a passive recipient of the philosophers of the past; rather, he puts himself in charge of improving their intellectual legacy through completing their statements, mending the deficiencies of their systems, and perfecting their methods. According to al-Kindī, philosophy is a cumulative intellectual progression of mankind, which has an unbroken chain of representatives among every human generation throughout history, and he envisages himself as a part of this distinguished community in his lifetime, himself a custodian of truth or *ḥikmah*.

The traditional Islamic conception of *ḥikmah* as a combination of knowledge and actions echoes in al-Fārābī's philosophical writings as well. In a philosophical context, he argues that philosophy combines theoretical virtues with practical ones; otherwise, he describes the knowledge of the theoretical sciences lacking the faculty for exploiting them for the benefit of others as "defective philosophy (*falsafah nāqiṣah*)".[27]

The dissertation consists of four chapters. Chapter one (*Ḥikmah* in Early Arabic Lexicography) examines the Arabic root *ḥ-k-m*, its primary meanings in the Arabic language, and its basic derivatives, with a particular focus on the word *ḥikmah*. This chapter further investigates *ḥikmah* in the works on technical terminology in Islamic scholarly disciplines and reviews the current situation in modern scholarship on the meaning of *ḥikmah*. Chapter two (*Ḥikmah* in Early Muslim Exegetical Literature) investigates *ḥikmah* in the Qur'an together with its semantic relationship with the word

[27] Al-Fārābī, *Taḥṣīl al-sa'ādah* (Hyderabad, 1926): 39.

kitāb (book). It analyzes the word *ḥikmah* in each Qur'anic instance within its own context and reconstructs the meaning, usages and relational semantic components of *ḥikmah* in the writings of early Muslim exegetes. Chapter three (*Ḥikmah* in Early Sufi Literature) is an examination of *ḥikmah* in early Sufi writings, including Sufi exegetical works, within a network of associated mystical concepts. In this regard, the chapter focuses on the particular relation of *ḥikmah* to other epistemological concepts in Sufism such as *'ilm* (knowledge), *ma'rifah* (gnosis), *'aql* (intelligence), *qalb* (heart) and *fiqh* (comprehension). This chapter also treats *ḥikmah* as a practical or applied concept found in the writings of earliest Muslim mystics, as they argue that being a very meritorious notion, *ḥikmah* cannot be properly understood or actualized without this aspect. Chapter four (*Ḥikmah* in Early Philosophical Literature) is a literary and semantic analysis of *ḥikmah* in the philosophical writings of early Muslim intellectuals. It is also an investigation of the earliest Muslim philosophers' reception and conception of philosophy in its particular relation to *ḥikmah* as it is mentioned in the primary authoritative Muslim scriptures. Finally, the chapter includes an analysis of the inner formative forces that caused Muslim intellectuals to become interested in Greek philosophy and its leading figures, as well as their expectation from philosophical inquiry.

ONE

Ḥikmah in Early Arabic Lexicography

It has been argued that the root *ḥ-k-m* in the Arabic language expresses primarily juridical and administrative or governmental activity, as opposed to its use in other Semitic languages where it had long ago denoted the idea of "wisdom". In accordance with this historical semantic background, it has been suggested, the Arabic words *ḥikmah* and *ḥakīm* in the sense of "wisdom" and "wise", respectively, and any derivation from this root that seems to imply "wisdom" owe their origin to foreign influence.[28] I cannot completely disregard this possibility for two simple reasons: first, I have not investigated the original meaning/s of the root *ḥ-k-m* in the context of comparative Semitic languages; and second, for the time being, we do not possess sufficient original, physical texts in ancient pre-Islamic Arabic to reject or prove this argument. The earliest linguistic documents in which we can examine the situation are younger pre-Islamic Arabic materials, primarily poetry, that have survived to our day; unfortunately, however, they do not help us in a satisfactory manner, because they do not include ample attestations (*shawāhid*) for the word *ḥikmah* sufficient to lead us to well-argued conclusions.[29]

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[28] Joseph Horovitz, *Koranische Untersuchungen* (Berlin and Leipzig, 1926): 72; Arthur Jefferry, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'an* (Lahore, 1977): 111; Franz Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant* (Leiden, 1971): 37.

[29] Alfred Bloch, "Zur altarabischen Spruchdichtung," in *Westöstliche Abhandlungen*, ed. F. Meier (Wiesbaden, 1954): 181-224. Bloch says, "In der vorislamischen Gnomik fehlt das Wort *ḥikmah* bezeichnenderweise fast ganz," 221; Dimitri Gutas, "Classical Arabic Wisdom Literature: Nature and Scope," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 101.1, (1981): 51.

Facing this visibly unpromising scholarly situation, nevertheless, my presentation in the following pages regarding the meanings of the root *ḥ-k-m* in the Arabic language in general and of *ḥikmah* in particular will hopefully give some evidence that Arabic lexicographers do provide enough materials to guide us to the conclusion that during pre- and early Islamic times, the Arabic words *ḥikmah* and *ḥakīm* could carry the sense of "wisdom". Lexicographers of the Arabic language introduce a highly inclusive philological articulation for the root *ḥ-k-m* to such an extent that it is not easy to exclude the possibility that the root has something to do with "wisdom" in Arabic as well. The existence of pre-Islamic Arabic gnomic literature (*ḥikam/ḥikmiyyāt*)[30] and sages (*ḥukamā' al-'Arab*), including the famous Luqmān b. 'Ād, who uttered these wise sayings, can also be a proof that the words *ḥikmah* and *ḥakīm* were in use in the Arabic language even before the rise of Islam.

Methodologically speaking, my position may be as plausible as that of those who argue that the Arabic word *ḥikmah* in the sense of "wisdom" owes its origin to foreign influence. Within the study of the historical development of the Arabic language, their argument has a highly speculative character. It lacks the textual bases of the pre-Islamic stage of the Arabic language required to examine the entire semantic environment of the word *ḥikmah* sufficient to claim that it did not originally have the sense of "wisdom". The fact that the burden of proof is thus on them makes my argument at least defensible, if it can be sustained by the early Islamic sources available.

[30] The question of when this word was originally coined to refer to this literary genre seems quite intractable. I have not seen, unfortunately, any indication to shed light on this issue throughout my readings.

A compromising argument between the two positions may assert that considering the limited amount of the presently extant linguistic materials in ancient pre-Islamic Arabic and their lack of mentioning of *ḥikmah* in the sense of "wisdom", one may not identify unquestionably the origin of *ḥikmah* in this sense in the Arabic language. It might well have entered into Arabic in this sense from other Semitic languages and in time become an indigenous word in this language. If this was the case, then one scenario to explain the nonoccurrence of *ḥikmah* in those materials would be to say that *ḥikmah* had not penetrated into the repository of the true *'arabiyyah*, i.e., poetry, but was already part of the language of the Arab Jews, Christians, and *ḥunafā'*,[31] who employed *ḥikmah* in the sense of "wisdom" throughout their *ḥikam*. As far as my own approach to this subject matter is concerned – following my abovementioned guideline – since I have not examined the original meaning/s of the root *ḥ-k-m* in the context of comparative Semitic studies, my discussions in this chapter will be limited to lexicographical materials in the Arabic language alone and their semantic relation to *ḥikmah* in the sense of "wisdom".

Accordingly, in this chapter, by focusing on primary lexicographical materials, I will analyze the meanings of the Arabic root *ḥ-k-m* with a special attention to *ḥikmah*. In the first section, I will use works that are lexicographical in the technical sense of the word. In the second section, I will examine more specialized dictionaries oriented mainly towards Qur'anic vocabulary and terminology. Since I will investigate *ḥikmah* in the Qur'an based on *tafsīr* literature in the following chapter, I will here be interested in Qur'anic quotations only to the extent that they are explained in these Arab-Islamic

[31] I owe this explanation to my teacher and academic adviser Wolfhart Heinrichs.

philological works. In the third and final section, I will discuss related arguments in secondary sources in western languages.

I. 1. The root *ḥ-k-m* and its primary meanings in the Arabic language

a. With the basic meaning of *mana'a* "to restrain"

The Arabic word *ḥikmah* is a noun derived from the root *ḥ-k-m* (*ḥakama, yaḥkumu, ḥukm*). According to the majority of Arabic lexicographers, the primary meaning of this root is *mana'a* (to prevent, restrain, or withhold). The expression *ḥakamat al-lijām* (bit of a beast's bridle) represents one of the earliest usages of the root *ḥ-k-m* in this sense, and apparently, other abstract usages were derived metaphorically from this concrete usage. Thus the prevention or restraint in question could be from injustice (*ẓulm*), ignorance (*jahl*), or foolishness (*safah*), and accordingly, *ḥikmah* can be defined as justice (*'adl*), knowledge (*'ilm*), or forbearance (*ḥilm*), respectively, as al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad (d. 175/795) points out in his *Kitāb al-'Ayn*.[32] Everything that prevents (*mana'a*) a person from acting in a corrupt manner or from wrongdoing (*fasād*) can be described by the verbs derived from the root *ḥ-k-m*, i.e., *ḥakama*, *ḥakkama*, or *aḥkama*.

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[32] Al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad, *Kitāb al-'Ayn*, eds. Mahdī al-Makhzūmī and Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrā'ī (Baghdad, 1980-1985) III: 66-67. For this basic meaning of the root *ḥ-k-m* see also, Ibn Durayd, *Jamharat al-lughah*, ed. Ramzī Munīr Ba'albakkī (Beirut, 1987-1988) I: 564; al-Azharī, *Tahdhīb al-lughah*, eds. 'Abd al-Karīm al-'Azabāwī and Muḥammad 'Alī al-Najjār (Cairo, 1964-1967) IV: 114; Ismā'īl b. 'Abbād, *al-Muḥīṭ fī al-lughah*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥasan Āl Yāsīn (Beirut, 1994) III: 387; Ismā'īl b. Ḥammād al-Jawharī, *al-Ṣiḥāḥ, tāj al-lughah wa-ṣiḥāḥ al-'Arabiyyah*, eds. Imīl Badī' Ya'qūb and Muḥammad Nabīl Ṭarīfī (Beirut, 1999) V: 226; al-Ṣaghānī, *al-Takmilah wa-al-dhayl wa-al-ṣilah li-Kitāb Tāj al-lughah wa-ṣihāḥ al-'Arabiyyah*, eds. Ibrāhīm Ismā'īl al-Abyārī and Muḥammad Khalaf Allāh Aḥmad (Cairo, 1977) V: 618; Ibn Fāris, *Mu'jam maqāyīs al-lughah*, ed. Ibrāhīm Shams al-Dīn (Beirut, 1999) I: 311; Ibn Fāris, *Mujmal al-lughah*, ed. Hādī Ḥasan Ḥammūdī (Kuwait, 1985) II: 94; Ibn Sīdah, *al-Muḥkam wa-al-muḥīṭ al-a'ẓam*, ed. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Hindāwī (Beirut, 2000) III: 51; al-Zamakhsharī, *Asās al-balāghah* (Beirut, 1996): 89; Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'Arab* (Cairo, 1981) II: 953; al-Fīrūzābādī, *al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ* (Egypt, 1884) III: 97; Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-'arūs min jawāhir al-Qāmūs*, ed. 'Alī Shīrī (Beirut, 1994) XVI: 161-162.

Likewise is in the case of the beast, for the *ḥakamah* restrains it from running vehemently and thus a horse having a *ḥakamah* on its head is described as *faras maḥkūmah*.[33]

The same word *ḥakamah* is also used metaphorically for a man in reference to the fore part of his face as a metaphorical indication of his social and moral status.[34] A report (*ḥadīth*) narrated from 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb says, "If a servant (human being) behaves humbly, God exalts his *ḥakamah*." The word *ḥakamah* in this context means status, rank, value (*qadr*), or dignity (*manzilah*).[35] Lexicographers of the Arabic language report that the Arabs of pre- and early Islamic times would use some expressions that testify to this sense, such as, "he has (a) *ḥakamah* in our opinion (*lahū 'indanā ḥakamah*)" i.e., value; and "such and such person is elevated with respect to rank (*fulān 'ālī al-ḥakamah*)."[36] If someone is described as having a high or low *ḥakamah*, this description refers to his high or low status in people's opinion, respectively. In another hadith, the word *ḥakamah* is used in a slightly different extended sense: "Every human being has a *ḥakamah* on his head; when he intends to do something bad, then if God wants to bridle him, He bridles him".[37] Here the word does not refer to the fore part of the face, neither to social rank or

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[33] Al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad, III: 67; al-Azharī, IV: 114; Ismā'īl b. 'Abbād, III: 387; al-Jawharī, V: 226; Ibn Fāris, *Mu'jam*, I: 311; Ibn Fāris, *Mujmal*, II: 94; Ibn Sīdah, III: 51; al-Zamakhsharī, *Asās al-balāghah*, 89; Majd al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Nihāyah fī gharīb al-ḥadīth wa-al-athar*, ed. 'Alī b. Ḥasan b. 'Alī b. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Ḥalabī al-Atharī (Dammām: 2000): 223; Ibn Manẓūr, II: 954; al-Fīrūzābādī, III: 97; al-Zabīdī, XVI: 162.

[34] Ibn Sīdah, III: 51; al-Ṣaghānī, V: 618; Ibn al-Athīr, 223; Ibn Manẓūr, II: 954; al-Fīrūzābādī, III: 97; al-Zabīdī, XVI: 162.

[35] Ibn al-Athīr, 223; Ibn Manẓūr, II: 954; al-Zabīdī, XVI: 162.

[36] Ibn al-Athīr, 223; Ibn Manẓūr, II: 954; al-Zabīdī, XVI: 162.

[37] Ibn al-Athīr, 223; Ibn Manẓūr, II: 954.

dignity; instead, it is used in its literal sense of "bit",[38] though it is a man that wears it. Here it stands symbolically for divine control over the human being.

The meaning of the verb *aḥkama* in the sense of *mana'a* is also attested in the verse of Jarīr (d. 115/733?), "O sons of Ḥanīfah, restrain your foolish ones (*aḥkimū sufahā'akum*); indeed I fear for you that I may get angry."[39] Similarly, the phrase *ḥakamtu al-safīha wa-aḥkamtuhu* is used in the sense of "I restrained/prevented the foolish one from ignorant behavior."[40]

In the same context, Arabic lexicographers quote the saying of Ibrāhīm al-Nakha'ī (d. 95/714), "Restrain (*ḥakkim*) the orphan from acting in a corrupt manner, as you restrain your offspring," i.e., prevent him from acting in a corrupt manner (*imna'hu min al-fasād*) and make him good, just as you make your offspring good.[41] They further cite a report (*ḥadīth*) related by Ibn 'Abbās (d. 68/687): "A male person [in pre- and early Islamic times] used to inherit a woman from his relatives and he would prevent her from marrying until she would die or give her dower to him. God prevented (*aḥkama*) and forbade (*nahā*) this" i.e., He prevented (*mana'a*) this.[42]

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[38] Even though the word *ḥakamah* is referring here to the actual bit, its application to man is clearly figurative.

[39] Al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad, III: 67; Ismā'īl b. 'Abbād, III: 387; al-Jawharī, V: 226; Ibn Fāris, *Mu'jam*, I: 311; Ibn Fāris, *Mujmal*, II: 94; Ibn Sīdah, III: 51; al-Zamakhsharī, *Asās al-balāghah*, 89; Ibn Manẓūr, II: 953; al-Zabīdī, XVI: 161. Some lexicographers use the word *raja'a* (to restrain, refrain, hold back) as a synonym of *mana'a* in their expositions of the root *ḥ-k-m*. See for instance, al-Zabīdī, XVI: 161.

[40] Al-Jawharī, V: 226; Ibn Fāris, *Mu'jam*, I: 311; Ibn Fāris, *Mujmal*, II: 94; al-Zamakhsharī, *Asās al-balāghah*, 89; Ibn Manẓūr, II: 953; al-Zabīdī, XVI: 161.

[41] Al-Azharī, IV: 113; al-Zamakhsharī, *Asās al-balāghah*, 89; Ibn al-Athīr, 223; Ibn Manẓūr, II: 953; al-Zabīdī, XVI: 162.

[42] Ibn al-Athīr, 223; Ibn Manẓūr, II: 953; al-Zabīdī, XVI: 162.

Considering all these explanations for the word *mana'a* as the basic meaning of the root *ḥ-k-m*, one can conclude that Arab philologists present a quite wide-ranging and inclusive definition. They are not talking about a simple literal prevention or restraint; rather, they are referring to a positive attitude towards improving a current situation that is not good (*fasād*). Constructive qualities such as knowledge, justice, forbearance, and dignity are mentioned in this context as channels leading to a "wise" course of action. The sense *mana'a*, therefore, does include the possibility that the root *ḥ-k-m* has something to do with "wisdom".

b. With the basic meaning of *atqana* "to perfect"

The verbal form *aḥkama* means also *atqana* (to perfect, do expertly, or soundly) as it appears in the saying "experiences have rendered him sound in judgment (*qad aḥkamathu al-tajāribu*)[43]. Another verbal form, *istaḥkama*, similarly denotes "it/he has become *muḥkam* (perfect or sound)."[44] The word *uḥkima* (the passive voice of *aḥkama*) that appears in the Qur'anic verse 11:1, "a book whose verses are set clear, precise, or perfected (*uḥkimat āyātuh*)" has a similar meaning, i.e., its verses are set clear, precise, or perfected by commanding (*amr*) and prohibiting (*nahy*), and the statement of what is lawful (*ḥalāl*) and unlawful (*ḥarām*); "and then (they are) expounded (*fuṣṣilat*)," i.e. by promising (*wa'd*) and threatening (*wa'īd*). Ibn Sīdah (d. 458/1066) asserts that the verses of the Qur'an are set clear, precise, or perfected and then expounded in accordance with

[43] Al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad, III: 66; al-Azharī, IV: 113; Ibn Sīdah, III: 50; al-Zamakhsharī, *Asās al-balāghah*, 89; Ibn Manẓūr, II: 953.

[44] Al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad, III: 67; al-Azharī, IV: 113; Ismā'īl b. 'Abbād, III: 387; al-Jawharī, V: 226; Ibn Sīdah, III: 50; Ibn Manẓūr, II: 953; al-Zabīdī, XVI: 161.

what is needed to guide [people] towards believing in the oneness of God (*tawḥīd*), confirming prophethood, and establishing the religious laws. He quotes other verses from the Qur'an to validate his conclusion, such as 6:38, "We have neglected nothing in the Book," 12:111, "and detailed explanation of everything," and 47:20: "and when a decisive, clear, or perfected (*muḥkamah) sūrah* (chapter) is revealed."[45] When a person hears *muḥkam* verses, he does not need any additional information to understand them. This is the case with respect to the stories mentioned in the Qur'an relating to the previous prophets.[46]

Ibn Sīdah also mentions al-Zajjāj's (d. 337/949) interpretation of the word *muḥkamah* in the abovementioned verse (47:20). The latter argues that it means "not abrogated" (*ghayr mansūkhah*).[47] Other Arabic lexicographers follow this interpretation and in this context, they cite the following account from Ibn 'Abbās: "I recited the *muḥkam* at the time of the Messenger of God."[48] Ibn Manẓūr (d. 711/1311) says that with the word *muḥkam* here, Ibn 'Abbās means the expounded part[s] (*mufaṣṣal*) of the Qur'an, for nothing is abrogated from it[them]. According to Ibn Manẓūr's reports, some other scholars assert that *muḥkam* here refers to clearly intelligible verses (*muḥkamāt*) of the Qur'an, as opposed to not clearly intelligible ones (*mutashābihāt*), for the *muḥkam* is clear enough by itself and does not need anything else to clarify its meaning.[49]

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[45] Ibn Sīdah, III: 50. See also, Ibn Manẓūr, II: 953; al-Zabīdī, XVI: 161.

[46] Ibn Sīdah, III: 50.

[47] Ibn Sīdah, III: 50.

[48] Ibn Manẓūr, II: 952; al-Zabīdī, XVI: 163.

[49] Ibn Manẓūr, II: 952; Ibn al-Athīr, 223; al-Zabīdī, XVI: 163.

The sense *atqana*, therefore, may be considered a practical aspect of the root *ḥ-k-m*. Experiences improve man in a constructive way and make him sound in thinking and acting, which is exactly what is expected from a "wise" person. In addition, the fundamental principles of the Qur'an are based on *muḥkam* verses and these are precise statements to guide people to sound belief and action in accordance with *ḥikmah*.

c. With the basic meaning of *qaḍā* "to judge"

The root *ḥ-k-m* in general and the verbal form *ḥakama* in particular hold the meaning of *qaḍā* (to judge, rule, or administer) as well. Since scholars of the language focus mainly on the *maṣdar* or verbal noun form, *ḥukm*, in their articulations, let me deal with this word now. Arabic lexicographers define the word *ḥukm* as judgment or judicial decision (*qaḍā'*)[50] concerning a thing, that it is such a thing, or is not such a thing, whether it is necessarily connected with another thing or not.[51] This sophisticated definition is apparently a later articulation of a time when the discipline of Islamic law was well-grounded and established. Some of the lexicographers specified that *ḥukm* meant judgment with justice (*al-qaḍā' bi-al-'adl*).[52] Accordingly, the word *ḥākim* means "the enforcer of a legal determination (*munaffidh al-ḥukm*)" between people. Al-Aṣma'ī (d. 215/830) says, "the origin[al meaning] of the word *ḥukūmah* (authority to judge) derives from the sense of withholding a man from injustice"[53] and a *ḥākim* is named such

[50] Al-Jawharī, V: 225; Ibn Sīdah, III: 49; Ibn Manẓūr, II: 951-952; al-Fīrūzābādī, III: 97; al-Zabīdī, XVI: 160.

[51] Al-Zabīdī, XVI: 160.

[52] Al-Zabīdī, XVI: 160.

[53] Ibn Manẓūr, II: 952; al-Zabīdī, XVI: 160.

on account of the fact that he restrains and prevents an unjust person from committing injustice.[54]

This sense of *qaḍā'* simultaneously requires some preconditions on the part of *ḥākim* since the word *ḥukm* also means knowledge (*'ilm*) and comprehension in matters of religion (*al-fiqh fī al-dīn*), as in the hadith, "The Caliphate belongs to the Quraysh (Meccans) and *ḥukm* to the Anṣār (Medinans)." The Prophet linked the Anṣār with the notion of *ḥukm* on the basis of the fact that most of the knowledgeable personalities (*fuqahā'*) of the Companions, such as Mu'ādh b. Jabal, Ubayy b. Ka'b, and Zayd b. Thābit, were from the Anṣār.[55] Ibn Manẓūr cites a Qur'anic verse, 19:12, "We (God) gave him (John) *ḥukm* [when he was] yet a little child (*ṣabiyyan*)," and states that the word *ḥukm* in this verse means *'ilm* and *fiqh*. He also quotes a saying, "silence is a *ḥukm*, but only a few practice it," which is frequently cited in *tafsīr* literature as a statement by Luqmān as well as by the Prophet Muḥammad.[56] Ibn Manẓūr argues that just as in the above-mentioned Qur'anic verse, the word *ḥukm* here denotes *'ilm* and *fiqh*. In the same context, he mentions a hadith, "Indeed, some poetry is *ḥukm* (*inna min al-shi'ri la-ḥukman*)". In Ibn Manẓūr's view, this statement indicates that in poetry there are useful words freeing a person from ignorance (*jahl*) and foolishness (*safah*). Some scholars assert that with the word *ḥukm*, the Prophet meant admonitions (*mawā'iẓ*) and proverbs/adages (*amthāl*) from which people would benefit.[57]

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[54] Al-Zabīdī, XVI: 160.

[55] Ibn al-Athīr, 223; Ibn Manẓūr, II: 951-952; al-Zabīdī, XVI: 165.

[56] Al-Suyūṭi, *al-Durr al-manthūr fī al-tafsīr al-ma'thūr* (Beirut, 1983) VI: 513.

[57] Ibn Manẓūr, II: 951-952.

Besides its usage as a technical term in the context of Islamic legal studies, the word *ḥukm* has far-ranging connotations in the Arabic language. Its sense of *qaḍā'* does not refer to an arbitrary judicial decision. Rather, it is closely related to other meanings of the root *ḥ-k-m*, especially to the idea of a "wise" course of action. A *qāḍī* is a *ḥākim* who is expected to be a knowledgeable, competent, insightful, and understanding person so that he could give a just and "wise" judgment. The meaning of the word "wisdom" in English includes such ideas of knowledge, judgment, and insight as well. The definition *qaḍā'* for the Arabic root *ḥ-k-m*, therefore, may also be interpreted as implying this sense of "wisdom".

2. *Ḥikmah*, a noun derived from the root *ḥ-k-m*

As far as the word *ḥikmah* itself is concerned, Arabic lexicographers report that its meaning is very closely related to the meaning of *ḥukm* and thus to *'adl*, *'ilm* and *ḥilm*[58] on the basis of the fact that each of these words includes a sense of preventing a person from doing or committing something not good. Their articulations can quite possibly be read in light of the idea of "wisdom" in its general sense. Ibn Fāris (d. 395/1005) argues that just like the word *ḥukm*, whose original meaning is preventing a person from committing an injustice (*al-man' min al-ẓulm*), *ḥikmah* connotes a sense of restraining, for it prevents a person from ignorance (*jahl*)[59]. This semantic proximity between the words *ḥukm* and *ḥikmah* can be seen in narrations in which *ḥukm* and *ḥikmah* are used interchangeably. Regarding the word *ḥukm* in the two sayings, *inna min al-shi'ri la-*

[58] Al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad, III: 66; Ismā'īl b. 'Abbād, III: 387; Ibn Sīdah, III: 50; Ibn Manẓūr, II: 953.

[59] Ibn Fāris, *Mu'jam*, I: 311; Ibn Fāris, *Mujmal*, II: 94.

ḥukman (indeed some poetry is *ḥukm*) and *al-ṣamtu ḥukmun wa-qalīlun fā'iluhu* (silence is a *ḥukm*, but only a few practice it), some narrations record the word *ḥikmatan* instead of *ḥukman*.[60]

Jāḥiẓ (d. 255/869) cites a verse by the pre-Islamic poet Zabbān b. Sayyār where Zabbān makes fun of his fellow Nābighah's superstition. The story behind the poem is the following: Zabbān and Nābighah decided to set out on a raid (*ghazw*). Right before their departure, a locust fell onto Nābighah. He considered this an evil sign and preferred to stay behind. At the end, however, Zabbān came back from the raid safely and on that occasion, he composed the verse:

> *tahkabbara ṭayrahu fīhā Ziyādun li-tukhbirahu wa-mā fīhā khabīru*
> *aqāma ka-anna Luqmāna bna 'Ādin ashāra lahu bi-ḥikmatihi mushīru*[61]

A possible translation of this verse would be:

> Ziyād [Nābighah] consulted his omen about it to tell him, but he does not have any experience with omens; He stayed [behind], as if Luqmān b. 'Ad were guiding him with his wisdom[62]

Zabbān uses the words *ḥikmah* and *khabīr* together in this poem, apparently implying the intimate relationship between wise sayings and experience.[63]

Ibn Durayd (d. 321/933) defines *ḥikmah* as it appears in the report (*khabar*), "*Ḥikmah* is the stray camel of the believer (*ḍāllat al-mu'min*)" as:

> Every word that exhorts you (*wa'aẓatka*), restrains you (*zajaratka*), and calls you (*da'atka*) to a noble deed or deters you (*nahatka*) from a disgraceful thing/deed is a *ḥikmah* and *ḥukm*. And this is the interpretation of the saying of the Prophet Muḥammad, "Indeed, some poetry is *ḥukm* and some eloquent style (*bayān*) is magic (*siḥr*)."[64]

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[60] Ibn al-Athīr, 223; Ibn Manẓūr, II: 951-952; al-Zabīdī, XVI: 165.

[61] Al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al- Ḥayawān*, ed. 'Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn (Cairo, 1966-1969) V: 555.

[62] I have followed Gutas' translation with some modifications of my own. Gutas, "Classical Arabic Wisdom Literature," 51.

[63] Ibid., 51.

[64] Ibn Durayd, I: 564.

Some other scholars define the word *ḥukm* in this hadith as "profitable discourse (*kalām nāfi'*) restraining a person from ignorance and foolish behavior (*safah*) and forbidding them."[65] It is also explained as "admonitions (*mawā'iẓ*) and proverbs (*amthāl*) profitable to men,"[66] as I have mentioned above.

Following previous lexicographical authorities, al-Zabīdī (d. 1205/1791) argues that just like the word *ḥukm*, *ḥikmah* means justice in judgment (*al-'adl fī al-qaḍā'*). He further gives a more sophisticated definition than those of his predecessors. He asserts that the word *ḥikmah* denotes "knowledge of the true natures of things and action in accordance with their requirements (*al-'ilmu bi-ḥaqā'iqi al-ashyā'i 'alā mā hiya 'alayhi wa-al-'amalu bi-muqtaḍāhā*)". It is divided into a theoretical (*'ilmiyyah*) and a practical (*'amaliyyah*) part. Some scholars state that *ḥikmah* is "a quality of the intellectual faculty (*hay'at al-quwwah al-'aqliyyah al-'ilmiyyah*)"; and this is the metaphysical *ḥikmah* (*al-ḥikmah al-ilāhiyyah*), i.e., metaphysics. The *ḥikmah* in the Qur'anic verse 31:12, "We (God) gave Luqmān *ḥikmah*," refers to the evidence of the intellect in accordance with the rules of the religious law (*aḥkām al-sharī'ah*). Some other authorities define *ḥikmah* as "the attainment of that which is true/right by knowledge and action/deed." As far as God is concerned, the word *ḥikmah* means "the knowledge of things and their origination in the most perfect manner," while it means "knowledge and doing of good things/deeds" when applied to man.[67] Apparently Zabīdī defines the concept of *ḥikmah* in Muslim

[65] Ibn al-Athīr, 223; al-Zabīdī, XVI: 165.

[66] Al-Zabīdī, XVI: 165.

[67] Ibid., XVI: 161.

scholarship in an interdisciplinary context. In his analysis, he derives information extensively from philosophical as well as legal statements regarding this term.

The word *ḥikmah* also occurs in the sense of forbearance (*ḥilm*), which in turn means controlling/management (*ḍabṭ*) of one's own soul and temper in times of excitement of anger (*hayajān al-ghaḍab*). If this definition is correct, then it is close to the meaning of justice (*'adl*).[68]

Arabic lexicographers exemplify their definitions for the word *ḥikmah* through Qur'anic citations. For instance, mentioning the basic meanings of *ḥikmah* as *'adl*, *'ilm*, and *ḥilm,* Ibn Sīdah analyzes *ḥikmah* in two Qur'anic verses as follows:

> Regarding *ḥikmah* in the verse, 2:269, "He (God) gives the *ḥikmah* to whomever He wills," there are two definitions: prophethood and the Qur'an. The Qur'an is sufficient as *ḥikmah*, for the people during the Prophet's lifetime became knowledgeable through it after [a time of] ignorance. As for the word *ḥikmah* in the verse, 43:63, "And when Jesus came with the clear signs he said, 'I have come to you with the *ḥikmah*'," it means the Gospel (*Injīl*).[69]

Ibn Sīdah's explanations on the basis of these two verses imply that he identifies these *ḥikmah*s – both are definite – primarily with the institution of prophethood or revelation; for in the first case he attributes *ḥikmah* to the Qur'an and in the second one to the Gospel.

Al-Zabīdī introduces a quite elaborate discussion of the meaning of the word *ḥikmah* in the Qur'an. He lists three verses in which, according to him, *ḥikmah* means prophethood, as follows: 3:48, "He (God) will teach him (Jesus) the Book and the *ḥikmah*;" 2:251, "God gave him (David) the kingship and the *ḥikmah*;" and 38:20, "We (God) gave him (David) the *ḥikmah*." The word *ḥikmah* occurs also in the sense of the

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[68] Ibid., XVI: 161.

[69] Ibn Sīdah, III: 50.

Qur'an, the Torah, and the Gospel, for each of these comprises the *ḥikmah* of that which is spoken (*al-ḥikmah al-manṭūq bihā*), which is the secrets of the sciences of the Law and the Path (*asrār 'ulūm al-sharī'ah wa-al-ṭarīqah*). These heavenly books also contain the *ḥikmah* of that which is not spoken or ineffalable *ḥikmah* (*al-ḥikmah al-maskūt 'anhā*), which is the science of the secrets of the Divine Essence (*'ilm asrār al-ḥaqīqah al-ilāhiyyah*).[70] In this last section of his discussion, al-Zabīdī refers evidently to Sufi terminology.

Al-Zabīdī mentions the verse 2:269, "He (God) gives *ḥikmah* to whomever He wants, and whoever is given *ḥikmah* has been given much good" and argues that the word *ḥikmah* here means "[knowledge of] the interpretation of the Qur'an and speaking that which is correct regarding it." Al-Zabīdī further defines the *ḥikmah* as "obedience to God (*tā'at Allāh*)", "comprehension in matters of religion (*al-fiqh fī al-dīn*) and acting in accordance with it (*al-'amal bihi*)", "understanding (*fahm*)", "pious fear (*khashyah*)", "moral scrupulousness (*wara'*)", "doing/saying that which is correct/right (*iṣābah*)", and "reflecting (*tafakkur*) upon the command[s] of God and adherence to them."[71] Al-Zabīdī simply lists all these definitions for the *ḥikmah* in this verse, but without providing any further attestations (*shawāhid*), Qur'anic or otherwise.

The word *ḥikmah* is also defined as "knowledge of the most excellent things by the most excellent [kind of] knowledge (*ma'rifat afḍal al-ashyā' bi-afḍal al-'ulūm*)." Accordingly, the *ḥakīm* is the one who executes the niceties of the crafts masterfully and

[70] Al-Zabīdī, XVI: 161.

[71] Ibid., XVI: 161.

perfects them (*yuḥsin daqā'iq al-ṣinā'āt wa-yutqinuhā*).[72] This definition is one of the basic philosophical defitions of *ḥikmah*, as I shall discuss in detail in Chapter four. Al-Fīrūzābādī (d. 817/1415) summarizes the explanations by the previous authorities and states that depending on its context, the word *ḥikmah* could mean *'adl*, *'ilm*, *ḥilm*, *nubuwwah*, the Qur'an and the Gospel alike.[73]

3. The words *ḥakam*, *ḥakīm*, *ḥākim*, *muḥakkam* and *muḥakkim* and their meanings in various contexts

The words *al-ḥakam*, *al-ḥakīm*, and *al-ḥākim* including *aḥkam al-ḥākimīn* (the most qualified to judge among those who judge or the most capable of those who possess the attribute of *ḥikmah*) are among the names of God mentioned in the Qur'an.[74] God is the Just judge in His judgment,[75] He is the possessor of *ḥikmah*[76] and of *ḥukm*.[77] As far as their usage as attributes of God is concerned, the words *al-ḥakam*, *al-ḥakīm*, and *al-ḥākim* have meanings that are very close to each other.[78] In addition to its being used particularly for God, the words *ḥakam*, *ḥakīm*, and *ḥākim* are used for man to describe his

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[72] Ibn Manẓūr, II: 951.

[73] Al-Fīrūzābādī, III: 97.

[74] See for instance, 6:114, 2:32, 2:129, 7:87, 10:109, 11:45, 95:8.

[75] Ibn Durayd, I: 564.

[76] Ismā'īl b. 'Abbād, III: 386.

[77] Ibn Manẓūr, II: 951.

[78] Ibid., II: 951.

qualities. A knowledgeable person or possessor of *ḥikmah* is called *ḥakīm*. A person who does things perfectly or masterfully is named *ḥakīm* as well.[79]

As far as its morphological pattern is concerned, Arabic lexicographers assert that the word *ḥakīm* in the pattern of *fa'īl* could semantically be associated with *ḥākim*, *muḥkim*, or *muḥkam* in the patterns of *fā'il* (i.e., active participle of the first form), *muf'il* (i.e., active participle of the fourth form), or *muf'al* (i.e., passive participle of the fourth form), respectively.

According to Majd al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr's (d. 606/1209) explanations, the words *ḥakam* and *ḥakīm* are among the Most Beautiful Names of God, and both words denote *al-ḥākim*, which in turn means judge (*qāḍī*). Morphologically speaking, the word *ḥakīm* is in the pattern of *fa'īl* in the sense of *fā'il* (i.e., *ḥākim*); or else he (the *ḥakīm*) is one who perfects things, thus it is in the pattern of *fa'īl* in the sense of *muf'il* (i.e., *muḥkim*). Some scholars argue that *ḥakīm* is the possessor of *ḥikmah* (*dhū al-ḥikmah*) and *ḥikmah* means "knowledge of the most excellent of things by the most excellent [kind] of knowledge." *Ḥakīm* is also used to describe those who execute the niceties of the crafts masterfully and perfect them.[80] Ibn Manẓūr mentions other words on the pattern *fa'īl* that possess the same meaning in their *fā'il* pattern, such as the words *qadīr* (powerful) and *'alīm* (knowledgeable) as in the senses of *qādir* and *'ālim*,[81] respectively, but he does not mention any word in the pattern of *fa'īl* as in the sense of *muf'il*.

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[79] Al-Jawharī, V: 225; Ibn Manẓūr, II: 953.

[80] Ibn al-Athīr, 222-223; Ibn Manẓūr, II: 951.

[81] Ibn Manẓūr, II: 951.

Regarding the hadith describing the Qur'an, "it (the Qur'an) is the wise remembrance (*al-dhikr al-ḥakīm*)," Arabic lexicographers assert that the word *ḥakīm* here means that the Qur'an is a remembrance that decides in your favor or against you; or it denotes that the Qur'an is perfected and there is nothing in it that could be called disagreement or defect. Thus in this context, *ḥakīm* is on the pattern of *fa'īl* in the sense of *muf'al* (i.e., *muḥkam*).[82]

Scholars of the Arabic language mention Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī and 'Amr b. al-'Āṣ as the two arbitrators (*ḥakamān*) between 'Alī and Mu'āwiyah when the two were on the verge of declaring war on each other. A group of people who opposed the idea of judgment between the two parties detached themselves from 'Alī and on this occasion, the term Khawārij (lit: those who go out) was coined to designate them. As the oldest religious sect in Islam, they were called the *muḥakkimah* on account of the fact that they rejected the judgment of the *ḥakamayn*. In their view, judgment (*ḥukm*) belonged only to God (*lā ḥukma illā li-Allāh*),[83] their slogan against 'Alī and Mu'āwiyah from which their appellation was derived. These people were also called the Ḥarūriyyah and, referring to their disallowance of any judgment other than by God, the expression *taḥkīm al-ḥarūriyyah* was invented to describe their situation.[84]

Ibn 'Abbād (d. 385/995) refers to another meaning of the word *ḥakīm* closely related to the very basic meaning of the root *ḥ-k-m*, i.e., "to prevent, restrain or

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[82] Ibn al-Athīr, 223; Ibn Manẓūr, II: 952; al-Zabīdī, XVI: 165.

[83] Al-Jawharī, V: 227; Ibn Sīdah, III: 50; Ibn Manẓūr, II: 952; al-Zabīdī, XVI: 160.

[84] Al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad, III: 67; al-Azharī, IV: 114; Ismā'īl b. 'Abbād, III: 387; Ibn Sīdah, III: 50; Ibn Manẓūr, II: 952-953; al-Zabīdī, XVI: 160. In fact, the appellation "Ḥarūriyyah" derived from Ḥarūrā', a certain town of Kufa, where those people first assembled and professed the doctrine that judgment belongs only to God. For further detail see, E. W. Lane "Ḥarūriyyah" in *Arabic-English Lexicon* (Lahore, 1978).

withhold". He states that the *ḥakīm* is the person who holds his soul back from its caprice and who is vigilant (*mutayaqqiẓ*).[85] The expression *ḥakuma al-rajulu* is used to praise a person when he attains and becomes imbued with the very meaning of this quality.[86] When a person becomes a wise man (*ḥakīm*), the expression *qad aḥkamathu al-tajāribu* (experiences have rendered him sound in judgment) is used to portray his condition.[87]

In addition to their mention of the Qur'anic occurrences of *ḥukm* and/or *ḥikmah* as attributed to God, the Qur'an, prophets, and Luqmān, lexicographers list some wise male and female individuals among the Arabs of pre-Islamic times (*ḥukamā'* and *ḥukkām/ḥakīmāt al-'Arab fī al-jāhiliyyah*). They mention for instance, Aktham b. Ṣayfī, Ḥājib b. Zurārah, 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib (the Prophet's grandfather), and Abū Ṭālib (the Prophet's paternal uncle) among the *ḥukamā' al-'Arab fī al-jāhiliyyah.* As for wise women (*ḥakīmāt*), scholars list the names, for instance, of Ṣuḥr bint Luqmān, Hind bint al-Khuss, Jum'ah bint Ḥābis, and Ibnat 'Āmir b. al-Ẓarib.[88] The tribe of Tamīm were known for their wisdom and Ibn Durayd mentions that Aktham b. Ṣayfī, who belongs to this tribe, was one of the foremost *ḥukamā' al-'Arab.* Aktham uttered many wise sayings (*lahū kalām kathīr fī al-ḥikmah*).[89] At the same time, a person advanced in age is described as *ḥakam.*[90]

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[85] Ismā'īl b. 'Abbād, III: 387.

[86] Al-Azharī, IV: 114.

[87] Al-Azharī, IV: 113; al-Zamakhsharī, *Asās al-balāghah*, 89; Ibn Manẓūr, II: 953.

[88] Al-Fīrūzābādī, III: 97; al-Zabīdī, XVI: 160-164. They also report some people named by the words derived from the root *ḥ-k-m*, such as Ḥakam, Ḥakīm/Ḥakīmah, Ḥakkām, Aḥkam, and the like.

[89] Ignaz Goldziher, *Muslim Studies II*, ed. S.M. Stern (New York, 1971): 191.

[90] Ismā'īl b. 'Abbād, III: 388; al-Ṣaghānī, V: 618; al-Fīrūzābādī, III: 97; al-Zabīdī, XVI: 163.

Arabic lexicographers define the words *muḥakkam* and *muḥakkim* as well. They cite the verse by Ṭarafah b. 'Abd's (d. ?/560?) where he employs the word *muḥakkam*, "I wish that the *muḥakkam* and the admonished one (*maw'ūẓ*) [myself] would be your voice at the time when that which is false becomes visible."[91] Scholars define this word here as "an old man strengthened by experiences [in affairs] to whom *ḥikmah* is attributed."[92]

The expression "*muḥakkam fī nafsihi*" denotes "a person who is forced to judge with regard to himself," or more particularly, "a person who is obliged to make a choice between denial of God and slaughter, and chooses slaughter." In this context, lexicographical authorities cite a hadith, "Verily Paradise is for the *muḥakkamūn*." Historically speaking, the *muḥakkamūn* were a group of individuals among the people called Aṣḥāb al-Ukhdūd (the People of the Pit) who fell into the hands of the enemy. When they were put in the very critical situation of making a choice between slaughter (*qatl*) and denial of God (*kufr*), they choose to remain steadfast in their monotheism and to be slaughtered.[93] The same meaning can be attested in another hadith narrated by Ka'b [al-Aḥbār] (d. 32/652), "Verily, there is a house in Paradise and only a prophet, upright

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[91] Al-Ṣaghānī, V: 618; Ibn Fāris, *Mu'jam*, I: 311; Ibn Fāris, *Mujmal*, II: 94; Ibn Manẓūr, II: 953; al-Zabīdī, XVI: 163. Text in al-Zabīdī, XVI: 163: *layta l-muḥakkama wa-l-maw'ūẓa ṣawtakumā taḥta t-turābi idhā mā l-bāṭilu (i)n-kashafā.*

[92] Al-Jawharī, V: 227; al-Ṣaghānī, V: 618; Ibn Fāris, *Mu'jam*, I: 311; Ibn Fāris, *Mujmal* II: 94; al-Zamakhsharī, *Asās al-balāghah*, 89; Ibn Manẓūr, II: 953; al-Fīrūzābādī, III: 97; al-Zabīdī, XVI: 163.

[93] Al-Jawharī, V: 227; Ibn Fāris, *Mu'jam*, I: 311; Ibn Fāris, *Mujmal*, II: 94-95; al-Zamakhsharī, *Asās al-balāghah*, 89; Ibn al-Athīr, 223; Ibn Manẓūr, II: 953; al-Fīrūzābādī, III: 97; al-Zabīdī, XVI: 163. The Aṣḥāb al-Ukhdūd in this context seems to refer to the Christians of Najrān slaughtered by Dhū Nuwās around 523 A.C. The expression occurs in the Qur'an (85: 4-8): "Slain were the People of the Pit, the fire abounding in fuel, when they were seated over it and were themselves witnesses of what they did with the believers. They took revenge on them only because they believed in the All-mighty, the All-praiseworthy." Muslim scholars report various interpretations for the Aṣḥāb al-Ukhdūd. In addition to their mention of the Christians of Najrān, they state that the expression may be an eschatological entity. For a list of the interpretations see, Rudi Paret, "Aṣḥāb al-Ukhdūd" in *EI²*; Roberto Tottoli, "The People of the Ditch" *Encyclopedia of the Qur'an*, ed. Jane D. McAuliffe (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2007).

person (*siddīq*), martyr (*shahīd*), or *muḥakkam fī nafsihi* can reside in it."[94] As for the word *muḥakkim*, it is defined as a person who treats himself without discrimination or privilege (*munṣif fī nafsihi*).[95] Scholars also mention that this word describes a person who has control over himself.[96]

II. 1. *Ḥikmah* in *'ulūm al-Qur'ān* literature

The word *ḥikmah* as used in the Qur'an is analyzed in various lexicographically-oriented disciplines of exegesis such as the *wujūh wa-al-naẓā'ir*[97] and *gharīb al-Qur'ān*[98] works that elucidate Qur'anic vocabulary in detail. Muqātil b. Sulaymān (d. 150/767) argues that the word *ḥikmah* in the Qur'an has five meanings (*wujūh*):

a. It means admonitions (*mawā'iẓ*) that exist in the Qur'an regarding commanding and prohibiting (*min al-amr wa-al-nahy*). This is the meaning of *ḥikmah* in 2:231, "and [remember] what He (God) has sent down on/to you of the Book (*kitāb*) and *ḥikmah*." In this context, Muqātil explains the word

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[94] Ibn Manẓūr, II: 953; al-Zabīdī, XVI: 163. One may speculate that this hadith could be talking personally about the Prophet Muḥammad and the first three of the al-Khulafā' al-Rāshidūn (rightly guided caliphs), for Abū Bakr was known as the *siddīq*, 'Umar was assassinated and thus became a martyr, and 'Uthmān let people, in a way, kill himself.

[95] Ibn al-Athīr, 223; Ibn Manẓūr, II: 953; al-Zabīdī, XVI: 163.

[96] Al-Azharī, IV: 115.

[97] This branch of Qur'anic sciences (*'ulūm al-Qur'ān*) focuses on multivalent and synonymous words in the Qur'an. More literally speaking, the *wujūh* explains semantical expansion of the same word having multiple meanings upon different occasions of mention in the Qur'an, such as *hudā* (explanation, religion, belief, inviter...), *ṣalāḥ* (belief, well-being, gentleness...), *rūḥ* (mercy, a certain angel, Gabriel, revelation, Jesus), and the like. The *naẓā'ir*, on the other hand, deals with different words having the same meaning in the Qur'an such as *jahannam, nār, saqar, ḥuṭamah,* and *jaḥīm*, all of which mean hell. See for instance, Muqātil b. Sulaymān, *Kitāb al-Wujūh wa-al-naẓā'ir*, ed. Ali Özek (Istanbul, 1993).

[98] The *gharīb al-Qur'ān* literature elucidates uncommon or ambiguous words in the Qur'an. See for instance, Ibn Qutaybah, *Tafsīr gharīb al-Qur'ān*, ed. Aḥmad Ṣaqr (Cairo, 1958) and al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *Mufradāt alfāẓ al-Qur'ān*, ed. Ṣafwān 'Adnān Dāwūdī (Damascus, 1992).

kitāb as the Qur'an, and *ḥikmah* as the admonitions that exist in the Qur'an regarding commanding, prohibiting, the lawful (*ḥalāl*) and unlawful (*ḥarām*). He presents other exemplary verses from the Qur'an in which the word *ḥikmah* is used in the sense of admonition such as 4:113, "God has sent down on you the *kitāb* and *ḥikmah*;" 3:48, "He (God) will teach him (Jesus) the *kitāb* and *ḥikmah*;" 19:12 "We (God) gave him (John) *ḥukm* [when he was] yet a little child (*sabiyyan*)." In this last Qur'anic occurrence, Muqātil explains the word *ḥukm* as understanding (*fahm*) and knowledge (*'ilm*). Actually, this explanation fits more properly in the second category in which Muqātil explains both *ḥikmah* and *ḥukm* as *fahm* and *'ilm*. In order to make sure that this is not an editorial mistake, I have checked two different editions of the book[99], but they both have the same categorization.

b. The *ḥukm* – Muqātil uses the word *ḥukm* rather than *ḥikmah* and apparently he lumps them together – means understanding (*fahm*) and knowledge (*'ilm*). This occurs in verses 31:12, "Indeed, We (God) gave Luqmān the *ḥikmah*;" 21:79, "We (God) gave each of them (David and Solomon) *ḥukm* and *'ilm*;" and 6:89, "Those are they to whom We (God) gave the *kitāb* and *ḥukm*."

c. The word *ḥikmah* means prophethood (*nubuwwah*). Examples of this occurrence are in the verses 4:54, "We (God) gave the people of Abraham the Book and *ḥikmah*;" 38:20, "We (God) gave him (David) *ḥikmah* and decisive speech (*faṣl al-khitāb*);" and 2:251, "God gave him (David) kingship (*mulk*) and *ḥikmah*."

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[99] Muqātil, *Kitāb al-Wujūh wa-al-naẓā'ir*, ed. Ali Özek (Istanbul, 1993): 29; Muqātil, *al-Ashbāh wa-al-naẓā'ir fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, ed. 'Abd Allāh Maḥmūd Shaḥātah (Cairo, 1975): 112.

d. The word *ḥikmah* means interpretation (*tafsīr*) of the Qur'an as it comes in the verse 2:269, "whoever is given the *ḥikmah*, he is indeed given much good".

e. The *ḥikmah* means the Qur'an as it occurs in 16:125, "Call to the way of your Lord with the *ḥikmah*."[100]

In his work *al-Taṣārīf*, Yaḥyā b. Sallām (d. 200/815) introduces a semantic categorization for the word *ḥikmah* very similar to that of Muqātil. He too says that the word *ḥikmah* has five meanings (*wujūh*):

a. It means [the notion or institution of] the prophetic practice (*sunnah*) – Ibn Sallām uses the word *sunnah* here instead of *mawā'iz*, which is used by Muqātil – that exists in the Qur'an with respect to commanding, prohibiting, lawful, and unlawful. Ibn Sallām basically cites the same verses that Muqātil does and concludes that in all these Qur'anic instances the word *ḥikmah* is used in the sense of *sunnah*. Ibn Sallām notes also that the historical origin of this definition goes back to Qatādah (d. 118/736), who says that the words *kitāb* and *ḥikmah* mean the Qur'an and *sunnah*, respectively.

b. The word *ḥikmah* means understanding (*fahm*) and intellect/reason (*'aql*); Ibn Sallām uses the word *'aql* instead of *'ilm* which is used by Muqātil. This is the case in verse 19:12, "We (God) gave him (John) *ḥukm* [when he was] yet a little child (*ṣabiyyan*)." Ibn Sallām explains the word *ḥukm* here as *fahm* and *'aql*. Muqātil mentions this verse under the first category. Ibn Sallām provides a more reasonable classification by placing this verse under the second category. In addition to the verses cited by Muqātil, Ibn Sallām quotes

[100] Muqatil, *Kitāb al-Wujūh*, 28-29.

two other verses describing Joseph's and Moses' heavenly gift as being granted *ḥukm*, 12:22 "We (God) gave him (Joseph) *ḥukm* and *'ilm*;" and 28:14, "We (God) gave him (Moses) *ḥukm* and *'ilm*." Ibn Sallām asserts that the word *ḥukm* in these verses denotes *'aql* and *fahm*.

It is worth mentioning that neither Muqātil nor Ibn Sallām distinguish between *ḥikmah* and *ḥukm* in the Qur'anic texts. This occurrence could be a result of the linguistic convention that used the two words interchangeably, as I have discussed previously.

c. The word *ḥikmah* means prophethood (*nubuwwah*). Ibn Sallām cites the same Qur'anic verses as Muqātil does in his classification above.

d. *Ḥikmah* means the Qur'an externally (*ẓāhiran*) and knowledge of its interpretation (*'ilm tafsīrih*). This meaning comes in 2:269, "whoever is given *ḥikmah*," i.e. the knowledge of that which exists in the Qur'an and reading of it externally or according to its apparent meaning (*qirā'atahu ẓāhiran*), "is indeed given much good". Ibn Sallām's emphasis on the apparent meaning of the Qur'an might be referring to the principle in Muslim exegetical studies that every kind of interpretative attempt in relation to the Qur'an should emerge out of the outward senses of Qur'anic statements.

e. The word *ḥikmah* means the Qur'an itself as it occurs in 16:125 "Call to the way of your Lord with the *ḥikmah*" i.e., with the Qur'an.[101]

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[101] Yaḥyā b. Sallām, *al-Taṣārīf*, ed. Hind Shalabī (Tunis, 1979): 201-203. Within this framework, al-Imām al-Shāfi'ī (d. 204/820) asserts that in the Qur'anic instances where the words *kitāb* and *ḥikmah* are mentioned together, the *ḥikmah* refers to the *Sunnah* of the Prophet. Muḥammad b. Idrīs al-Shāfi'ī, *al-Risālah*, ed. Muḥammad Sayyid Kīlānī (Cairo, 1983): 44-45.
Another author on *al-wujūh wa-al-naẓā'ir* literature, al-Damaghānī (d. 478/1085) gives exactly the same five-fold semantic classification as Muqatil for the meaning of the word *ḥikmah*. Al-Damaghānī argues that *ḥikmah* mentioned in the Qur'an is of five meanings (*awjuh*) as *maw'iẓah*, *fahm* and *'ilm*, *nubuwwah*,

In his work, *Taḥṣīl naẓā'ir al-Qur'ān*, al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (d. *ca.* 300/910) provides four meanings for the word *ḥikmah*: comprehension (*fiqh*), knowledge (*'ilm*), prophethood (*nubuwwah*), and judging between people (*al-qaḍā' bayn al-khalq*). Al-Tirmidhī introduces his explanations in a sophisticated Sufi tone. He asserts that *ḥikmah* is the esoteric dimension of knowledge (*bāṭin al-'ilm*). The exoteric dimension (*ẓāhir*) is for the scholars of God's command (*al-'ulamā' bi-amr Allāh*). The esoteric dimension is for the scholars of God (*al-'ulamā' bi-Allāh*) and the scholars of God's governing (*al-'ulamā' bi-tadbīr Allāh*). The last two groups differ substantially from the first group, for the scholars of God's commands are not knowledgeable of God and His *ḥikmah*. On a more exoteric plane, al-Tirmidhī considers *ḥikmah* as an indispensable quality for an honest judging between people and accordingly he defines it as *al-qaḍā' bayn al-khalq*.[102] In another work of his, al-Tirmidhī elucidates his argument on the fundamental difference between the two modes of knowledge (*ẓāhir* and *bāṭin*) and asserts that certain subtle meanings, including the meaning of *ḥikmah*, can be understood only by distinguished scholars (*khāṣṣ al-'ulamā'*) who are the *ḥukamā'*. In his view, the scholars of the *ẓāhir* cannot comprehend these delicate meanings.[103]

Relying on its lexicographical meaning, Muḥammad b. 'Uzayr al-Sijistānī (d. 329/941) asserts that the word *ḥikmah* in the Qur'anic verse 16:125 is a name for intellect (*'aql*). *'Aql* is called *ḥikmah* on account of the fact that it guards or prevents its owner

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tafsīr al-Qur'ān, and *al-Qur'ān*. Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad al-Damaghānī, *Iṣlāḥ al-wujūh wa-al-naẓā'ir*, ed. 'Abd al-'Azīz Sayyid al-Ahl (Beirut, 1970): 141-142.

[102] Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Taḥṣīl naẓā'ir al-Qur'ān*, ed. Ḥusnī Naṣr Zaydān (Cairo, 1969): 107-08. The expressions *'ulamā' bi-Allāh* and *'ulamā' bi-tadbīr Allāh* seem to refer to the notion of *awliyā'* (saints or friends of God), for Sufis believe that *awliyā'* possess the knowledge of God and His actions.

[103] Al-Tirmidhī, *Taḥṣīl*,156 and 365-366.

from ignorance (*jahl*). He also mentions that the expression *ḥakamat al-dābbah* (bit of the beast) comes from the same meaning because it prevents the beast from acting in a recalcitrant or obstreperous manner.[104]

In his work, *Mufradāt alfāẓ al-Qur'ān*, al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī (d. 502/1108) presents a relatively full-fledged entry for the root *ḥ-k-m*. He cites definitions by the earlier Arabic lexicographers who report that the original meaning of *ḥakama* is *mana'a li-al-iṣlāḥ* (to prevent, restrain, withhold for the sake of doing good) and the expression *ḥakamat al-dābbah* comes from the same original meaning. In the legal context, al-Iṣfahānī defines the word *ḥukm* as "judgment or judicial decision concerning a thing, that it is such a thing, or is not such a thing, whether it is necessarily connected with another thing or not."[105]

As far as the word *ḥikmah* itself is concerned, al-Iṣfahānī asserts that it means the attainment of that which is true/right by knowledge and intellect/reason (*iṣābat al-ḥaqq bi-al-'ilm wa-al-'aql*).[106] It is interesting that in his definition, al-Iṣfahānī employs the word *'aql* rather than *'amal* (action or deed), which we find in the definitions of the earlier Arabic philologists.[107] A reasonable explanation for this could be that, orthographically speaking, the words *al-'amal* and *al-'aql* are written very much alike, and thus this could be a simple mistake by the person who copied or edited the original manuscript. The same could be in the aforementioned case of Ibn Sallām, who defines

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[104] Muḥammad b. 'Uzayr al-Sijistānī, *Tafsīr gharīb al-Qur'ān*, ed. Muḥammad al-Ṣādiq Qamḥāwī (Egypt, 1970): 105.

[105] Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, 248.

[106] Ibid., 249.

[107] Ibn Qutaybah, *Tafsīr gharīb al-Qur'ān*, 32.

ḥikmah as *'aql* instead of *'ilm* which is Muqātil's definition. Considering this kind of possibility, I would not want to make conclusive arguments about such small differences in the texts. Still, based on the original meanings of the two roots *ḥ-k-m* and *'-q-l* which is *mana'a*, we could argue that al-Iṣfahānī gives this definition deliberately. The semantic similarity between the two roots can also be seen in the words *ḥakamah* (bit) and *'iqāl* (cord/rope used for hobbling the feet of a camel) that both denote a means of restraining a beast.

In al-Iṣfahānī's view, there is a difference in the sense of the word *ḥikmah* when it is applied to God and to a human being. With respect to God, *ḥikmah* means knowledge of things and their creation in utmost perfection (*ma'rifat al-ashyā' wa-ījādihā 'alā ghāyat al-iḥkām*). When it is used in reference to a human being, on the other hand, *ḥikmah* means knowledge of creation/things in existence and doing good deeds (*ma'rifat al-mawjūdāt wa-fi'l al-khayrāt*); this is the meaning that occurs in the Qur'an to describe Luqmān in 31:12, "Indeed We gave Luqmān the *ḥikmah*". In the same way, the word *ḥakīm* refers to different meanings when it is applied to God as opposed to other things; for example, in 95:8, "Is not God the most just of judges? (*a laysa Allāh bi-aḥkam al-ḥākimīn*),[108] the word refers to God; while in 10:2, "Those are the signs of the *ḥakīm* book (*al-kitāb al-ḥakīm*)", *ḥakīm* refers to the Qur'an and implies *ḥikmah*. Again in 54:5, "far-reaching, complete, or perfect *ḥikmah* (*ḥikmah bālighah*)," the word *ḥikmah* indicates the Qur'an. Al-Iṣfahānī mentions that some people argue that when it refers to the Qur'an, the word *ḥakīm* means *muḥkam* (set clear, precise, or perfect), as in 11:1,

[108] Apparently, al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī uses *ḥakīm* and *hākim* as synonyms in this context.

"Whose verses are set clear, precise, or perfected (*uḥkimat āyātuh*)". In al-Iṣfahānī's view, both explanations (*ḥikmah* and *ḥakīm*) are correct for describing the Qur'an.[109]

Furthermore, al-Iṣfahānī introduces a semantic comparison between the words *ḥukm* and *ḥikmah*. He argues that *ḥukm* is a more general term than *ḥikmah*, for every *ḥikmah* is a *ḥukm*, but not vice versa. *Ḥukm* means deciding judicially regarding one thing with respect to another thing. One would say, "it is such a thing, or not such a thing." In this context, al-Iṣfahānī interprets the word *ḥikmah* in the hadith, "Indeed, some poetry is *ḥikmah*," as "true proposition" (*qaḍiyyah ṣādiqah*).[110] Al-Iṣfahānī also mentions five previous definitions given for the word *ḥukm* and *ḥikmah* as "1) interpretation of the Qur'an; 2) knowledge of the Qur'an respecting its abrogating passages, and clearly or not clearly intelligible statements; 3) knowledge of the Qur'anic verses; 4) prophethood; and 5) realities of the Qur'an that are peculiar to some distinguished prophets." Of the *ḥikmah* peculiar to some distinguished prophets is the knowledge of *muḥkam* and *mutashābih* verses mentioned in 3:7. Al-Iṣfahānī asserts that the meaning of a *muḥkam* statement is clear and no doubt would arise regarding it with respect to its wording (*lafẓ*) or meaning (*ma'nā*).[111]

2. *Hikmah* in other types of dictionaries

In addition to the above-mentioned kinds of works that are specifically devoted to Qur'anic vocabulary, there are other lexicographical works in which we see noteworthy

[109] Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, 249.

[110] Ibid., 249-250.

[111] Ibid., 250-251.

statements concerning the root *ḥ-k-m* and its derivatives.[112] For instance, in his work *al-Furūq al-lughawiyyah* – in which he deals with synonymous words in the Arabic language as well as with the subtle differences between them – Abū Hilāl al-'Askarī (d. 389/993) elucidates the semantic difference between the words *'ālim* and *ḥakīm*. He asserts that *ḥakīm* has three meanings:

a. It means *muḥkim*, which is the active participle of the verb *aḥkama* (to perfect, do well), just as the word *badī'* means *mubdi'* (creator) and *samī'* means *musmi'* (the one who has s.o. listen [to him]).[113] Al-'Askarī's first example looks appropriate, but the second one does not seem to support his classification, for the *samī'* does not exactly mean *musmi'*.

b. It means *muḥkam*, which is the passive participle of the same verb, as it (*ḥakīm*) occurs in the Qur'an 44:4, "On that night every precise matter (*amr ḥakīm*) is made distinct." The word *ḥakīm* here means *muḥkam*. If God is described by the word *ḥikmah* in this sense, it would be among His attributes of action (*min ṣifāt fi'lih*).[114]

   Apparently, in this and the following categories, al-'Askarī is referring to a theological (*kalāmī*) question regarding the attributes of God. In this context, the *mutakallimūn* categorize the attributes of God found in the Qur'an under two major groups, namely the attributes of essence (*ṣifāt al-dhāt*) and the

[112] Normally, I would here be expected to discuss the word *ḥikmah* in hadith dictionaries, but since I have previously cited most of the related materials in the example of *al-Nihāyah fī gharīb al-ḥadīth wa-al-athar* by Ibn al-Athīr, I do not see a need to assign a subsection to this genre of literature. Furthermore, in Chapter two, where I shall investigate *ḥikmah* in early Muslim exegetical works, I will treat *ḥikmah* in the statements of the Prophet in the context of related Qur'anic verses.

[113] Abū Hilāl al-'Askarī, *al-Furūq al-lughawiyyah*, ed. Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Salīm (Cairo, 1998): 96.

[114] Ibid., 96.

attributes of action (*ṣifāt al-fi'l*). The first group of attributes, such as "oneness (*tawhīd*)" and "eternity (*qidam*)", belongs peculiarly to God to the exclusion of the rest of the beings. Accordingly, one may not describe a human being with these attributes. As for the second group, in addition to God, other beings may be described by these attributes, such as "knowledgeable (*'alīm*)" and "generous (*karīm*)", even though the nature of these attributes differs substantially when we apply them to God as opposed to other beings. I should also add that such a categorization of the divine attributes is a highly controversial subject matter in Muslim theological discussions. In general Sunnī theologians embrace it, while the Mu'tazilī *mutakallimūn* do not draw any distinction of this kind between the attributes of God found in the Qur'an.[115]

c. It means "the person knowledgeable about the correct determinations of things (*al-'ālim bi-aḥkām al-umūr*)" and the word *ḥakīm* in this context is more specific than the word *'ālim*. If God is described by the word *ḥakīm* in this sense, then it would be among His attributes of essence (*min ṣifāt dhātih*).[116] Considering his explanations here, al-'Askarī does not seem to follow precisely the prevailing understanding of the theological question concerning the attributes of God, for he does not base his distinction between the attributes of God on whether the attribute in question belongs to God exclusively or not. Instead, he seems to base his categorization on the quality

[115] For further details see, Daniel Gimaret, "Ṣifa" in *EI²*.

[116] Abū Hilāl al-'Askarī, 96.

or the level of perfection of this attribute. His categorization, therefore, does not conform exactly to the *sifāt* discussions in *kalām* in the technical sense.

A respected author on technical vocabulary in Islamic scholarly disciplines, al-Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī (d. 816/1413), defines the word *ḥikmah* according to its context. He treats *ḥikmah* as a term in various Islamic disciplines and elucidates it accordingly. He enumerates five definitions for the word *ḥikmah* as follows.[117]

a. *Ḥikmah* is a scholarly discipline (*'ilm*) with which one searches for the realities of things as they are in existence in accordance with the capacity of man; thus it is a theoretical/speculative discipline (*'ilm naẓarī*), not an instrumental (*ghayr ālī*) one. *Ḥikmah* is also the configuration of the scholarly intellectual faculty (*hay'at al-quwwah al-'aqliyyah al-'ilmiyyah*), intermediary (*al-mutawassiṭah*) between deception (*jarbazah*), which is going too far (*ifrāṭ*) of this faculty, and stupidity (*balādah*), which is falling short of it (*tafrīṭuhā*).[118]

Evidently, al-Jurjānī here defines *ḥikmah* as a philosophical and ethical term. I will discuss this definition of *ḥikmah* in detail in Chapter four where I elaborate the concept of *ḥikmah* in early philosophical literature, especially in the case of Ibn Sīnā (d. 428/1037).

The next definition of *ḥikmah* in the *al-Ta'rīfāt* is more puzzling as contains more than one item under the same definition. It does not seem to be reflecting al-Jurjānī's own categorization, but all the editions of the book that I have consulted have the same classification. Here is a possible translation:

b. *Ḥikmah* has three meanings: creation (*ījād*), knowledge (*'ilm*), and triangular[119] acts (*al-af'āl al-muthallathah*) just like the sun, moon, and the others.

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[117] I simply follow here the enumeration of the editor, 'Abd al-Raḥmān 'Umayrah. At the same time, I have consulted to two other uncritical editions of the *al-Ta'rīfāt*, and they have the same categorization regarding the word *ḥikmah*. The first is Istanbul edition published in 1867 and the second is Beirut edition published in 1969. In addition to *ḥikmah*, the *al-Ta'rīfāt* lists two other derivatives of the root *ḥ-k-m*, namely, *ḥukm* (three instances) and *ḥukamā'* (three instances).

[118] Al-Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī, *al-Ta'rīfāt*, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān 'Umayrah (Beirut, 1987): 124.

[119] I am speculatively using the word "triangular" here as an astronomical/astrological term referring to the Triangulum, which is a constellation in the northern sky near Aries and Andromeda. The following two words, i.e., the sun (*shams*) and the moon (*qamar*) – both being celestial entities – lead me to such an

Ibn 'Abbās explained the *ḥikmah* that exists in the Qur'an as learning the permitted and prohibited things.
Some scholars say that the word *ḥikmah*, lexicographically speaking, means knowledge together with practice (*al-'ilm ma'a al-'amal*).
Some others say that people benefit from the *ḥikmah* in accordance with the capacity of mankind to decide on what is the truth in reality.
It is said that every speech that is consistent with the truth is a *ḥikmah*.
It is also asserted that the *ḥikmah* is reasonable/intelligible speech (*al-kalām al-ma'qūl*) well-protected from interpolation (*al-maṣūn 'an al-ḥashw*).[120]

Apparently here Jurjānī is interested mainly in lexicographical definitions of the word *ḥikmah*, but he also introduces definitions of *ḥikmah* found in Qur'anic exegetical literature (in the example of Ibn 'Abbās) and in philosophical works (the third definition). One might have reasonable doubts that this categorization does not reflect exactly al-Jurjānī's original systematization of the concept of *ḥikmah* throughout various Islamic disciplines, but something has happened to it in the hands of the later copyists or editors.

The next definition of *ḥikmah* is again philosophical, for it follows exactly the same definition of *ḥikmah* in the works of Ibn Sīnā, as we shall see more elaborately in Chapter four.

c. Metaphysics (*al-ḥikmah al-ilāhiyyah*) is a scholarly discipline (*'ilm*) that looks into the states of the beings that exist in the external world (*aḥwāl al-mawjūdāt al-khārijiyyah*) stripped of matter (*al-mujarradah 'an al-māddah*) which are not within the realm of our power and choice. Some say that it (*al-ḥikmah al-ilāhiyyah*) is the knowledge of the true natures of

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interpretation. But still, I should confess that I have not been able to understand exactly what al-Jurjānī means by this expression in this particular context. I have looked into other editions of the same book as well other books on the same subject to get some help, but unfortunately, I could not find any unquestionable solution to this matter. Another speculative possibility could be that al-Jurjānī uses the expression *al-af'āl al-muthallathah* to refer to the actions of Hermes Trismegistus, who is described in the works of Muslim writers on history of philosophy as "*al-muthallath bi-al-ḥikmah*" in the sense of "trismegistus". I will talk about the *ḥikmah* in this context in Chapter four in relation to Hermes. In a similar fashion, in his entry for "muthallathāt", the Iranian lexicographer 'Alī Akbar Dihkhudā presents a relatively detailed explanation for the word in an astronomical/astrological (*'ilm/aḥkām al-nujūm*) context. 'Alī Akbar Dihkhudā, *Lughatnāmah* (Tehran, 1994). I owe this final reference to A. M. Damghānī.

[120] Al-Jurjānī, 124.

things and action in accordance with it. For this reason it is divided into theoretical (*'ilmiyyah*) and practical (*'amaliyyah*) [parts].[121]

The following two definitions of *ḥikmah* seem to have written with a mindset that we find generally in Muslim mystical works, for they posit two dimensions of things, external or exoteric and internal or esoteric.

d. The *ḥikmah* of that which is spoken (*al-ḥikmah al-manṭūq bihā*) is the sciences of the religious law and of the Path (*'ulūm al-sharī'ah wa-al-ṭarīqah*).[122]
e. The *ḥikmah* of that which is not spoken (*al-ḥikmah al-maskūt 'anhā*) is the secrets of the reality or Divine Essence (*asrār al-haqīqah*) that scholars of exoteric knowledge (*'ulamā' al-rusūm*) and ordinary people (*'awāmm*) cannot comprehend sufficiently; it would [even] harm and destroy them, as it is narrated that [once] as the Prophet was passing through some lanes of Medina together with his companions, a woman beseeched them to go into her house and they did. They saw a burning fire around which the children of the woman were playing. The woman said, "O Prophet of God, is God more merciful toward His servants or (am) I toward my children?". The Prophet replied, "God is surely more merciful, for He is the most merciful of those who show mercy." She asked, "O Messenger of God, do you think that I would be willing to throw my child into this fire?" He replied, "No." She said, "Then how could it happen that God would throw His servants into the fire while He is the most merciful to them?" The narrator says that tears came to the eyes of the Messenger of God and said, "Exactly thus has it been revealed to me."[123]

Al-Jurjānī also defines the word *ḥukamā'* according to its context. His first definition reflects the traditional conception of a *ḥakīm* in Islamic milieu, that is to say, the *ḥakīm* is expected to combine his speech with his actions. Accordingly al-Jurjānī says: "The *ḥukamā'* are the ones whose words and practices are consistent with the

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[121] Ibid., 124-125.

[122] Ibid., 125.

[123] Ibid., 125. Al-Jurjānī also defines the word *ḥukm* right after *ḥikmah*, but he does not use *ḥikmah* and *ḥukm* interchangeably, as we have seen previously in the case of other scholars. He seems to be interested in *ḥukm* in more legal and logical context. He defines the *ḥukm* as follows:

a) "The *ḥukm* is predicating a thing of another [thing] (*isnādu amrin ilā ākhar*) positively (*ījāban*) or negatively (*salbiyyan*). In this way that which is not a *ḥukm* is inferred/deduced as the restrictive relationship (*al-nisbah al-taqyīdiyyah*)" (125).
b) "The *ḥukm* is placing a thing in its original (or proper) place (*waḍ' al-shay' fī mawḍi'ih*). Some say that *ḥukm* is anything for which there is a praiseworthy outcome (*'āqibah maḥmūdah*)" (125).
c) "Religious judgment (*al-ḥukm al-shar'ī*) consists of the judgment of God related to the acts of legally competent persons (*af'āl al-mukallafīn*)" (125).

sunnah."[124] Al-Jurjānī's second and third definitions of the *ḥukamā'* refer to two philosophical tendencies in the works of Muslim philosophers: the illuminationist/Platonic philosophers (*al-ḥukamā' al-ishrāqiyyūn*) whose leader being Plato, and the peripatetic philosophers (*al-ḥukamā' al-mashshā'ūn*) whose leader being Aristotle.[125]

Al-Jurjānī's treatment of *ḥikmah* does not contain an original contribution to the definitions of this concept presented by the previous scholarly authorities. He derives his information mainly from philosophical and mystical literatures. A more interesting occurrence in al-Jurjānī's writings, however, appears in his second definition – in fact definitions – of the *ḥikmah*, for he repeatedly introduces new meanings of *ḥikmah*, but under the same category. He does not explain the way he associates these meanings with each other. Therefore, unlike it is the case in the other categorical definitions of *ḥikmah*, in the second instance, al-Jurjānī's discussions – if this order is his own – do not appear a well-presented classification.

Another authority on technical terms in Muslim literature, al-Tahānawī (d. 1185/1745) asserts that the word *ḥikmah* originally means the perfecting of practice and speech (*itqān al-fi'l wa-al-qawl wa-iḥkāmuhumā*). In a terminological sense, *ḥikmah* is used to describe various disciplines. It refers to philosophical sciences, including practical and theoretical philosophy, economics, and politics. In this context, *ḥikmah* denotes definitive proof (*ḥujjah qaṭ'iyyah* or *burhān*) that leaves no doubt with respect to certainty, as mentioned in the Qur'anic verses 2:269, "Whoever is given *ḥikmah*, has

[124] Ibid., 125.

[125] Ibid., 125.

been given much good," and 16:125, "Call to the way of your Lord with *ḥikmah.*" In Sufi terminology, *ḥikmah* means knowledge of the destructive characteristics (*āfāt*) of the soul, Satan, as well as of ascetic practices (*riyāḍāt*).[126] Accordingly, the word *ḥakīm* designates the possessor of the knowledge of *ḥikmah*, of intellectual faculty, and of definitive proof alike. Al-Tahānawī's explanations for the term *ḥakīm* are primarily philosophically oriented. He states that the ultimate happiness (*al-sa'ādah al-'uẓmā*) and highest degree for the rational soul (*al-nafs al-nāṭiqah*) is the knowledge of the Creator (*ṣāni'*) with respect to His possession of the attributes of perfection as well as of being free from imperfection and everything that emanated from Him.[127] The method leading to this knowledge has two aspects. The first is the rational method practiced by theologians who follow one of the prophetic dispensations (*millah min milal al-anbiyā'*), but peripatetic philosophers should be excluded from this group. The second method is that of the people of ascetic discipline (*riyāḍah*) and spiritual struggle (*mujāhadah*). In their practice, these people follow *sharī'ah*, and Sufis who practice *sharī'ah* are the representatives of the second, but Illuminationist/Platonic philosophers (*al-ḥukamā' al-ishrāqiyyūn*) should be excluded from this group. Thus each method has two levels. The first results in perfecting the theoretical/intellectual faculty and advancing in its degrees (of excellence). The ultimate purpose of these degrees is [attaining] the acquired intellect (*al-'aql al-mustafād*). As for the second, its outcome is perfecting the practical faculty and moving up in its degrees (of excellence). On the third level of this faculty, prototypes (*ṣuwar*) of perceptions/knowables (*ma'lūmāt*) run towards the soul by way of

[126] Al-Tahānawī, *Kashshāf iṣṭilāḥāt al-funūn* (Istanbul, 1900): 405-406.

[127] Ibid., 406.

witnessing (*mushāhadah*) as it happens in the case of *al-'aql al-mustafād*. But *mushāhadah* is more perfect and more powerful than *mustafād* on account of the fact that in the latter, the outcome is not free of delusional doubts (*al-shubuhāt al-wahmiyyah*).[128]

Al-Tahānawī treats *ḥikmah* as a crucial concept in the center of all Islamic scholarly disciplines. He repeats the traditional meaning of *ḥikmah* in the sense of combining and perfecting speech and actions. From this point on, al-Tahānawī's expositions of *ḥikmah* have a highly philosophical tone, but with a mystical taste at the same time. Basing his argument on the Qur'anic verses, he identifies *ḥikmah* with demonstrative proof in logic. Following the previous Muslim philosophers, he considers the knowledge of *ḥikmah* to be a highly advanced epistemological level, as he explains it in conjunction with "the ultimate happiness" and "the rational soul", and "witnessing" and "the acquiring intellect". In the final analysis, al-Tahānawī regards "witnessing" as the most perfect degree of knowledge and he presents this mystical concept within a philosophical framework.

III. Current situation in western scholarship on the meaning of *ḥikmah*

There is not a comprehensive study in western scholarship concerning the diverse usages of *ḥikmah* in Muslim intellectual history. Chronologically speaking, Léon Gauthier appears to be the first to have devoted an article to the Arabic root *ḥ-k-m* and its derivatives.[129] According to his own statement, however, his attempt is only "une simple

[128] Ibid., 406-407.

[129] Léon Gauthier, "La Racine arabe *ḥ-k-m* et ses dérivés" *Homenaje a D. Francisco Codera*, ed. D. Eduardo Saavedra (Zaragoza, 1904): 435-454.

esquisse"[130] and therefore it falls short with respect to examining sufficient primary lexicographical sources to give an extensive analysis of the word. But we should at the same time give Gauther his due because he, for the first time, called attention to the topic within western scholarly circles. Another authority on Islamic intellectual disciplines, Josef Horovitz, is interested mainly in the Qur'anic use of the word *ḥikmah*. He argues that especially in the cases where it is coupled with the word *kitāb*, *ḥikmah* refers to some parts of the revealed books.[131] His explanations are not specifically oriented towards articulating *ḥikmah* on a wide-ranging scale and thus they provide only a partial definition of the word. As for Goichon's article on *ḥikmah* in the *EI*^{2}, it is excessively philosophically oriented. It does not define the term satisfactorily in its diverse applications within the interdisciplinary context of Muslim scholarship.[132] The studies most related to my own exploration are those by Franz Rosenthal and Dimitri Gutas.

In his book, *Knowledge Triumphant*, Rosenthal examines another essential concept, *'ilm* (knowledge), in the Muslim intellectual milieu. He mentions *ḥikmah*, however, merely insofar as it is related to *'ilm*. He translates *ḥikmah* into English as "wisdom" and the focus of his analysis seems to be the very western, or more properly Judaeo-Christian, distinction between "knowledge" and "wisdom". He reports that Syrian Christian philosophers defined knowledge as "the exact understanding of things through cognitive discernment", as opposed to wisdom, which is "the good administration of knowledge". Accordingly, they said, "every wisdom is at the same

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[130] Ibid., 453.

[131] Horovitz, 71-74.

[132] A. M. Goichon, "Ḥikma" in *EI*^{2}.

time knowledge, but not every knowledge is at the same time wisdom."[133] Christian theology in the West followed this distinction and gave further impetus to giving "wisdom" a higher rank than "knowledge". It was Augustine who defined "wisdom" as "the knowledge of things divine" in relation to "knowledge", which is properly applied to "the knowledge of things human."[134] As far as God is concerned, however, there is no distinction between "wisdom" and "knowledge." The distinction is relevant only to human beings, as "wisdom embodies a higher degree of knowledge and insight in the realm of both human perceptions and theological speculation."[135] Reading Arabic scholarly materials through such an occidentally oriented perspective takes Rosenthal away from treating the concept of *ḥikmah* in its indigenous Arabic linguistic setting. At the same time, however, I am aware of the fact that it would not be fair to criticize Rosenthal just because he does not present a comprehensive discussion of *hikmah* in a work which is not a monograph on *ḥikmah*. My disagreement with him, accordingly, is mainly of a methodological nature.

In western scholarship, Gutas should be singled out, both quantitatively and qualitatively, for his analysis of the concept of *ḥikmah* in the Muslim scholarly tradition. He has devoted two works to this subject matter.[136] His book, *Greek Wisdom Literature in Arabic Translation*, does not concern me so much, since he focuses in it primarily on Graeco-Arabic gnomologia. He deals with Greek and Arabic collections relating ethical

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[133] Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant*, 36.

[134] Ibid., 36.

[135] Ibid., 36-37.

[136] Gutas, *Greek Wisdom Literature in Arabic Translation* (New Heaven, 1975) and "Classical Arabic Wisdom Literature," 49-86.

sayings and anecdotes ascribed to famous philosophers – especially Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle – of the past. My discussion of Gutas' arguments will rather be based on his article "Classical Arabic Wisdom Literature: Nature and Scope." In this article he repeatedly emphasizes that the word *ḥikmah* used in pre- and early Islamic times is to be defined as "maxim".[137] He uses "maxim" in its current and common meaning of "a general truth, fundamental principle, or *rule of conduct*, especially when expressed in sententious form."[138] According to his own statement, the major Arabic lexicographers including al-Azharī and Ibn Manẓūr, however, disappoint Gutas, since they do not define the term *ḥikmah* in the sense of "maxim". In addition to this type of standard dictionary, more specialized lexica, such as al-Zamakhsharī's (d. 538/1143) *Asās al-balāghah* and Abū Hilāl al-'Askarī's *al-Furūq al-lughawiyyah* do not help Gutas with defining *ḥikmah* as "maxim" either. In Gutas' view, this occurrence is "doubtless due to the inherent bias of Arabic lexicography in favor of religious terminology and Bedouin poetic vocabulary, and to its exclusion of the commonly known (*al-ma'rūf*)."[139] The only dictionary in which he finds the remedy he is seeking is Ibn Durayd's *Jamharah* where the author defines the word *ḥikmah* in the sense of "maxim" and, according to Gutas' argument, only in this sense. In this same context, Gutas cites Ibn Durayd's aforementioned account articulating the saying (*khabar*), "*Ḥikmah* is the stray camel of the believer" as

> Every word that exhorts you, restrains you, and calls you to a noble deed or deters you from a disgraceful thing/deed is a *ḥikmah* and *ḥukm*. And this is the interpretation of the saying of the Prophet Muḥammad, "indeed, some poetry is *ḥukm* and some eloquent style is magic."[140]

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[137] Gutas, "Classical Arabic Wisdom Literature," 50.

[138] Ibid., 76. This is the definition given in *Webster's Third International Dictionary*, 1966.

[139] Gutas, "Classical Arabic Wisdom Literature," 50.

[140] Ibn Durayd, I: 564; Gutas, "Classical Arabic Wisdom Literature," 50.

One of the decisive operative factors in Gutas's argument seems to be related to the English language, rather than to Arabic. He does not define the word "wisdom" explicitly as opposed to "maxim" so that we could understand the way he draws semantic lines between the two words. The same English dictionary that Gutas uses defines the word "wisdom" as "**1 a**: accumulated philosophical or scientific learning: knowledge **b**: ability to discern inner qualities and relationships: insight **c**: good sense: judgment **2**: a wise attitude or course of action **3**: the teachings of the ancient wise men." In addition to the definition, "a general truth, fundamental principle, or rule of conduct," that Gutas cites, therein we find the explanation, "a saying of a proverbial nature" for the word "maxim." Apparently, the meanings of the words "wisdom" and "maxim" are quite concentric in the English language. When we use these words, especially in translating from other languages, there could be some semantic overlap between them. Providing a precise translation, is of course, very important, but being excessively exclusive results in a partial understanding of terms as well. I should further mention that Gutas is not the first to define the word *ḥikmah* as "maxim" in western scholarship. Gauthier, for instance, includes the word "maxim" in his list of definitions for *ḥikmah*,[141] as do many contemporary Arabic-English dictionaries, which cite the word "maxim" as a meaning of this Arabic word as well.[142]

As far as Gutas' description of Arabic lexicographers as "being biased" is concerned, I would not take this statement as a fair judgment. It is true that they were

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[141] Gauthier, 452.

[142] See for instance, Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, ed. J. Milton Cowan, 1980 and Rūḥī al-Ba'albakkī, *al-Mawrid*, 1996.

very much concerned with religious terminology, but this was a natural outcome of the huge influence that the Qur'an and its vocabulary exercised on Arabic thought, language, and literature, rather than an intentionally biased attitude on the parts of the lexicographers towards or against the materials in front of them. If we examine the aforementioned lexicographical works carefully, we can see that later authors quite honestly carried materials from the previous generations through to the following ones. Given the fact that as a scholarly field, lexicography is essentially a cumulative discipline, I do not see anything wrong with, for instance, Ibn Manẓūr's or al-Zabīdī's relying extensively on al-Iṣfahānī regarding some related points. And I would never accuse Ibn Manẓūr or al-Zabīdī of being biased in this respect. In Ibn Durayd's personal case, the situation is no different. He lists the meanings of the root *ḥ-k-m* as *'adl* and *man'* (including *ḥakamat al-lijām*),[143] just as al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad did in his work before Ibn Durayd.[144] Another interesting point is the fact that as the main basis of his argument, Gutas chooses a passage which is itself from a religious text. After all, Ibn Durayd is trying to define the word *ḥikmah* in a hadith, rather than a "commonly known (*ma'rūf*)" word. In conclusion, Gutas' blaming Arabic lexicographers for "being biased" seems to be a simplistic generalization regarding a whole scholarly field that has a long history and many distinguished exponents.

This is my methodological disagreement with Gutas. Now let me focus more particularly on the main passage that he claims to be the sole passage defining the word *ḥikmah* as "maxim". Here is a transliterated Arabic version, "*Kullu kalimatin wa'aẓatka*

[143] Ibn Durayd, I: 564.

[144] Al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad, III: 66-67.

wa-zajaratka wa-da'atka ilā makramatin aw nahatka 'an qabīḥin fa-hiya ḥikmatun wa-ḥukmun."[145] I have translated this passage above as "Every word that exhorts you, restrains you, and calls you to a noble deed or deters you from a disgraceful thing/deed is a *ḥikmah* and *ḥukm.*" Parallel to this statement, let me quote al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad's definition for the verbal forms derived from the root *ḥ-k-m*, "*Kullu shay'in mana'tahu min al-fasādi fa-qad [ḥakamtahu] wa-ḥakkamtahu wa-aḥkamtahu.*"[146] A translation of this passage would be, "[for] everything that you prevent from acting in a corrupt manner/wrongdoing, you have restrained it." I think in both passages, the dominant meaning of the root *ḥ-k-m* is *mana'a*, as both al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad and Ibn Durayd mention in their respective statements regarding the sense of *mana'a.* If we disregard the grammatical subjects of these two sentences and focus particularly on the meanings of the words derived from the root *ḥ-k-m* mentioned therein, we will see that their meanings are very close. In the first one, a word or saying prevents a person from something which is not good, while in the second one, a person prevents a thing from something which is not good. In this regard, there is no reason to single out Ibn Durayd's passage as opposed to others such as that of al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad. Semantically speaking, then, the basic meaning of these derived words may not refer solely to "maxim" to the exclusion of "wisdom." A "maxim" as well as a "wisdom/wise saying" can quite reasonably prevent a person from a disgraceful deed. By no means, am I trying to argue that Gutas' definition of the word as "maxim" is incorrect, but rather I am attempting to question the consistency of his understanding of the Arabic proof texts. His categorization of the

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[145] Ibn Durayd, I: 564.

[146] Al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad, III: 67.

Arabic materials does not seem to be well grounded. He seems to have set out from preconceived conclusions and then to have arranged the texts accordingly.

Furthermore, Gutas argues that the word *la-ḥukman* in the hadith (*inna min al-shi'ri la-ḥukman wa-inna min al-bayāni la-siḥran*) should be read as *la-ḥikaman* (i.e., the plural of *ḥikmah*) instead. In his opinion, certain sources read this word incorrectly.[147] In addition to Ibn Durayd's statement in the edition I have used, I have checked Ibn Manẓūr's text, for instance, and found that in both works the editors have vocalized the word as *la-ḥukman*. Ibn Manẓūr mentions the other version of the same hadith in which the word is *la-ḥikmatan* as well.[148] Stylistically speaking, however, *la-ḥukman* would work better than *la-ḥikaman*, as there is no apparent reason to break the textual parallelism (*la-ḥukman – la-siḥran*) and read the word as plural (*la-ḥikaman*) in this statement. Even Gutas himself seems to be aware of this idea of stylistic parallelism when, in the same article, he argues that the word *ḥikmah* in al-Afwah's (d. *ca.* 570 A.D.) verse, "*min ḥikmat al-'Arab wa-ādābihā* (one of the maxims and precepts of the Bedouin)" should not be considered singular for the sake of the stylistic parallelism of this expression.[149] Given the above-mentioned fact that Arabic lexicographers repeatedly define the word *ḥikmah* as *ḥukm*, there is no reason to force Gutas' reading either. Another saying I have mentioned above, *al-ṣumtu ḥukmun/ḥikmatun wa- qalīlun fā'iluhu* further testifies that the words *ḥukm* and *ḥikmah* can be used interchangeably in such

[147] Gutas, "Classical Arabic Wisdom Literature," 76.

[148] Ibn Manẓūr, II: 951-952.

[149] Gutas, "Classical Arabic Wisdom Literature," 50.

contexts. I do not think that Gutas would be willing to change the word *ḥukm* to *ḥikam* here as well.

TWO

Ḥikmah in Early Muslim Exegetical Literature

The word *ḥikmah* occurs twenty times in the Qur'an and in half of these it is coupled with the word *kitāb* (book).[150] This combination implies that *ḥikmah* is closely related to the divine revelation[151] in the form of revealed books or prophetic practice (*sunnah*). Within such a seemingly simple framework, nevertheless, *ḥikmah* received diverse interpretations by early commentators of the Qur'an. In the following pages, I will attempt to contextualize their arguments and discuss whether this diversity in expositions is of an exclusive or an inclusive nature. To be able to present a clearer picture, I will analyze the word *ḥikmah* in each Qur'anic instance within its own context.

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[150] In addition to the word *ḥikmah*, the Qur'an uses other derivatives of the root *ḥ-k-m*, including various verbal forms – such as *ḥakama* (40:48), *yuḥakkimu* (5:43), *yuḥkimu* (22:52), and *yataḥākamu* (4:60) – as well as its *maṣdar* and adjectival forms *ḥukm* and *ḥakīm*, respectively. In four places (12:22, 21:74, 21:79, and 28:14) *ḥukm* is accompanied by the word *'ilm*. As for the word *ḥakīm*, it is mentioned in the Qur'an ninety-seven times. As an attribute of God, *ḥakīm* never occurs alone. Rather, it is always coupled with another attribute such as *'azīz ḥakīm*, *'alīm ḥakīm / ḥakīm 'alīm*, *ḥakīm khabīr*, *ḥakīm ḥamīd*, *tawwāb ḥakīm*, *wāsi' ḥakīm*, and *'aliyy ḥakīm*. Muḥammad Fu'ād 'Abd al-Bāqī, *al-Mu'jam al-mufahras li-alfāẓ al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* (Cairo, 1988): 269-273.

[151] Accordingly, Horovitz argues that *ḥikmah* in this context refers to some part of the revealed books. Horovitz, 71-74. Ibn Qutaybah elucidates the meaning of the word *kitāb* in the Arabic language in general and in the Qur'an in particular. He asserts that the original meaning of *kitāb* is that which God wrote in the Tablet (*lawḥ*). From this original meaning, other meanings derive. Ibn Qutaybah lists a number of meanings as follows: 1) *qaḍā* (to decree), as in 58:21, "God has decreed (*kataba Allāhu*), 'I will surely overcome, I and My messenger';" in 9:51, "Naught will visit us except what God has decreed for us (*kataba Allāhu lanā*);" and in 3:154, "Those decreed (*kutiba*) to be killed would have come out to their death beds." 2) *furiḍa* (*kutiba*) (to be prescribed), as in 2:178, "Retaliation is prescribed for you (*kutiba 'alaykum*) in the matter of the murdered;" in 2:180, "When death approaches you, it is prescribed for you (*kutiba 'alaykum*);" and in 4:77, "They said, 'Our Lord, why have You prescribed fighting for us (*katabta 'alaynā al-qitāl*)'." 3) *ja'ala* (to make), as in 58:22, "He has written (*kataba*) faith within/upon their hearts;" in 3:53 and 5:83, "Write us down (*uktubnā*) among the witnesses;" and in 7:153, "So I will write it down (*sa-aktubuhā*) for those who are godfearing." 4) *amara* (to command, order), as in 5:21, "Go into the holy land which God has ordained for you (*kataba Allāhu lakum*)." It is said that *kataba* here means *ja'ala* as well, in which case the meaning would be, "Go into the land that God has written down (*katabahā*) for Abraham's progeny, i.e. He made it (*ja'alahā*) for them." Ibn Qutaybah, *Ta'wīl mushkil al-Qur'ān*, ed. Aḥmad Ṣaqr (Cairo, 1973): 462-463.

I believe that such a methodology will save us from a partial understanding of *ḥikmah* and illustrate it together with its relational semantic components.

The Qur'an says that *ḥikmah* was given to the Prophets in general (3:81) and to the ones from Abraham's progeny (4:54) – including David (2:251, 38:20), Jesus (3:48, 5:110, 43:63), and Muḥammad (2:151, 3:164, 4:113, 17:39) – in particular. There are other Qur'anic instances where the place of *ḥikmah* is taken by the word *ḥukm* which is also paired in three cases with *kitāb* (3:79, 6:89, 45:16). Early scholars of *tafsīr* do not distinguish essentially between *ḥikmah* and *ḥukm* in these contexts. The Qur'an, furthermore, cites the names of the Prophets Lot, Joseph, Moses, Solomon, and John (the Baptist) as having been given *ḥukm*. Rosenthal argues that this *ḥukm* indicates worldly authority.[152] Given the historical fact that not all these Prophets, especially Lot and John, were believed to have possessed temporal authority, however, Rosenthal's argument falls short of addressing the issue in its entirety. The Qur'an also mentions Luqmān, who is not typically regarded as a prophet in the technical sense of the word but a pious and upright person, as having enjoyed *ḥikmah* (31:12). Alongside these historical personalities, in a more general perspective, the Qur'an states that God gives *ḥikmah* to whomever He wills and that those who are given *ḥikmah* have indeed been given much good (2:269).

In accordance with such a Qur'anic framework, in this chapter, I have grouped the Qur'anic verses in which *ḥikmah* appears according to their contexts. In 2:269, *ḥikmah* seems to be used in a broader sense and applicable to every individual. In 16:125, *ḥikmah* is mentioned in the background of the main principles of religious teaching. A

[152] Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant*, 38.

large number of our verses deal with the Messengers of God, as I have mentioned above. I have contextualized these verses in relation to both their main subjects and their chronological order. Considering Luqmān's innate affinity with *ḥikmah* in the Islamic literature, I have treated the verse talking about him (31:12) as a separate subcategory by itself.

I. *Hikmah* as "much good"

In 2:269 the word *ḥikmah* is mentioned in a context connected to the Qur'anic concept of charity. The verses declare that seeking publicity in an act of charity is diametrically contradictory to its basic intent. Spending wealth sincerely in the way of God does not cause in reality any decrease in one's prosperity, since God multiplies the reward (2:261). Those who expend their wealth in the way of God and then do not follow up what they have expended with reproach and [verbal] injury will have their reward with their Lord (2:262), as honorable good words and forgiveness are better than a charitable act followed by injury (2:263). Believers should not invalidate their acts of charity with reproach and injury like those who expend of their substance to show off to men (2:264). Instead, believers should give of the good things they have earned and of that which God has produced for them from the earth; they should not give to the poor the worthless things that they would not be pleased to receive themselves (2:267). Satan threatens believers with poverty and orders them to indecency, while God, Who is All-embracing and All-knowing, promises them His forgiveness and bounty (2:268). The following verse says, "He (God) gives *ḥikmah* to whomever He wills, and whoever is

given *ḥikmah* has indeed been given much good; yet none remembers except men of understanding."[153]

Of all the verses in which the word *ḥikmah* is mentioned, this latter one has received the most extensive treatment by authorities in *tafsīr*. There are diverse interpretations of this *ḥikmah*. Ibn 'Abbās asserts that *ḥikmah* here means knowledge of the Qur'an regarding its abrogating (*nāsikh*) and abrogated (*mansūkh*) verses, its clearly (*muḥkam*) and not clearly (*mutashābih*) intelligible passages, its early (*muqaddam*) and later (*mu'akhkhar*) revealed verses, its passages pertaining to the lawful (*ḥalāl*) and unlawful (*ḥarām*), and its similitudes (*amthāl*).[154] Mujāhid (d. 104/722) explains the *ḥikmah* as being the Qur'an itself and states that God gives its correct understanding (*iṣābatahu*) to whomever He wills.[155] Al-Ḍaḥḥāk (d. 106/723) introduces a similar

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[153] For the Qur'anic passages, I have usually followed Arberry's translation with some modifications of my own.

[154] 'Alī b. Abī Ṭalḥah, *Ṣaḥīfat 'Alī b. Abī Ṭalḥah 'an Ibn 'Abbās fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, ed. Rāshid 'Abd al-Mun'im al-Rajjāl (Beirut, 1994): 119. See also Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī: Jāmi' al-bayān 'an ta'wīl āy al-Qur'ān*, ed. Maḥmūd Muḥammad Shākir (Cairo, 1954-) V: 576; al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manthūr* I: 348.
An early Shiite commentator of the Qur'an, al-Imām al-Manṣūr bi-Allāh 'Abd Allāh b. Ḥamzah introduces a complementary interpretation to that of Ibn 'Abbās when he asserts, "*ḥikmah* is useful knowledge (*'ilm nāfi'*), which is the knowledge of the Qur'an, the interpretation of its meanings, elaborate exposition of its concise expressions (*tafṣīl mujmalih*). It is the knowledge of the judgments (*aḥkām*) of the Qur'anic commands and prohibitions, of its *muḥkam* and *mutashābih* statements, of its specific/individual (*khāṣṣ*), general (*'āmm*), concise (*mujmal*), and elaborate (*mubayyan*) passages, and of its abrogating and abrogated verses. *Ḥikmah* is the knowledge of learning a lesson from the Qur'anic vicissitudes (*i'tibār bi-ghiyarih*), understanding its extraordinary similitudes (*amthālih al-'ajībah*) and unusual stories (*qiṣaṣih al-gharībah*). And this is in our view, the beginning of *ḥikmah* and key to *raḥmah*." Abd Allāh b. Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm al-Sharafī, *al-Maṣābīh al-saṭi'ah al-anwār: Tafsīr Ahl al-Bayt*, eds. Muḥammad Qāsim al-Hāshimī and 'Abd al-Salām 'Abbās al-Wajīh (Sa'dah, 1998): 83. Apparently, this definition is of a highly inclusive character, as it covers almost every aspect of Qur'anic knowledge.

[155] Mujāhid b. Jabr, *Tafsīr al-Imām Mujāhid b. Jabr*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Salām Abū al-Nīl (Beirut, 2003): 245. Al-Tustarī reports 'Umar b. Wāṣil's explanation of *ḥikmah* as "God gives correctness regarding His book to whomever He wills." Sahl b. 'Abd Allāh al-Tustarī, *Tafsīr al-Tustarī*, ed. Muḥammad Bāsil 'Uyūn al-Sūd (Beirut, 2002): 43.

clarification, saying that *ḥikmah* means the Qur'an as well as understanding it.[156] Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728), on the other hand, argues that *ḥikmah* in this verse denotes piety or moral scrupulousness (*wara'*) in the religion of God.[157] Zayd b. 'Alī (d. 120/738) asserts that this word refers to trust (*amānah*), exposition/eloquence (*bayān*), comprehension (*fiqh*), intellect (*'aql*), and understanding (*fahm*).[158] Ibn Qutaybah (d. 276/889), on the other hand, defines *ḥikmah* as "knowledge and practice (*al-'ilm wa-al-'amal*); a man is not called *ḥakīm* unless he combines the two."[159]

Al-Tustarī (d. 283/896) mentions an account with Sufi overtones to elucidate the meaning of *ḥikmah* as follows:

> It is reported from Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī (d. 74/693) that the Prophet Muḥammad said, "The Qur'an is God's *ḥikmah* among His servants. Whoever learns the Qur'an and practices it [accordingly], it is as if he receives prophethood, with the exception that he does not receive revelation. He is treated like the prophets except that he does not have a prophetic mission."[160]

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[156] Al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim, *Tafsīr al-Ḍaḥḥak*, ed. Muḥammad Shukrī Aḥmad al-Zāwītī (Cairo, 1999) I: 225. Ibn al-Jawzī cites the same interpretation mentioning Ibn Mas'ūd, Mujāhid, Muqātil as well as al-Ḍaḥḥāk's name to do so. Abū al-Faraj 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Alī b. al-Jawzī, *Zād al-masīr fī 'ilm al-tafsīr*, ed. 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Mahdī (Beirut, 2001) I: 242. Al-Suyūṭī reports that *ḥikmah* means the Qur'an, i.e., its *tafsīr*, for Ibn 'Abbās reminded that a pious person as well as a sinner might read the Qur'an. Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manthūr* II: 66.

[157] Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, *Tafsīr al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Raḥīm (Cairo, 1992) I: 196; Ibn al-Jawzī, I: 242.

[158] Zayd b. 'Alī, *Tafsīr gharīb al-Qur'ān*, ed. Ḥasan Muḥammad Taqī al-Ḥakīm (Cairo, 1992): 105. Similarly, Muqātil says that *ḥikmah* means knowledge of the Qur'an and comprehension of it. Muqātil, *Tafsīr Muqātil b. Sulaymān*, ed. 'Abd Allāh Maḥmūd al-Shaḥātah (Cairo, 1969) I: 143. 'Abd al-Razzāq asserts that this word denotes the Qur'an and comprehension of it. 'Abd al-Razzāq b. Hammām al-Ṣan'ānī, *Tafsīr 'Abd al-Razzāq*, ed. Maḥmūd Muḥammad 'Abduh (Beirut, 1999) I: 373. Hūd b. Muḥakkam (3rd/10th century) mentions a similar report saying that *ḥikmah* refers to comprehension in the Qur'an. Hūd b. Muḥakkam al-Huwwārī, *Tafsīr Kitāb Allāh al-'Azīz*, ed. Bālḥājj b. Sa'īd b. Sharīfī (Beirut, 1990) I: 250. Ibn Wahb reports that *ḥikmah* means intellect in the religion. 'Abd Allāh Ibn Wahb, *al-Jāmi' li-'Abd Allāh b. Wahb b. Muslim Abī Muḥammad al-Miṣrī; bi-riwāyat Saḥnūn b. Sa'īd*, ed. Miklūsh Mūrānī (Beirut, 2003) II: 161.

[159] Ibn Qutaybah, *Tafsīr gharīb al-Qur'ān*, 32.

[160] Al-Tustarī, 42. Al-Baghawī mentions the same interpretation on the authority of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī saying, "Whoever is given the Qur'an, it is as if he has received prophethood with the exception that he has not been given revelation." Al-Ḥusayn b. Mas'ūd al-Baghawī, *Tafsīr al-Baghawī, al-musammā Ma'ālim al-tanzīl*, eds. Khālid 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-'Akk and Marwān Suwār (Multan, 1988?) I: 257.

Al-Tustarī mentions another Prophetic statement narrated by Abū Hurayrah (d. 59/679) saying,

> The Qur'an is *ḥikmah*. Whoever learns the Qur'an in his youth, the Qur'an becomes a component of his body. Beware; hell-fire does not touch a heart attentive to the Qur'an, neither does it touch a body that stays away from things forbidden in it and legitimizes for itself things made permissible in it [the Qur'an]. [Such a person] believes in the clearly intelligible passages (*muḥkamih*) of the Qur'an, while he refrains from jumping to conclusions regarding the less-clearly intelligible statements (*waqafa 'inda mutashābihih*), and [he] does not become an innovator about it [the Qur'an].[161]

A linguistically focused commentator, al-Zajjāj (d. 311/923), reports that there are two views regarding *ḥikmah* in this verse: Some scholars argued that it means *nubuwwah* (prophethood), while Ibn Mas'ūd (d. 32/652) defined *ḥikmah* as the Qur'an and said:

> The Qur'an is sufficient as *ḥikmah*, because by means of the Qur'an the nation [of Muḥammad] became knowledgeable after [a time of] ignorance (*jahl*). The Qur'an is a link (*ṣilah*) to every knowledge/discipline that brings one close to God and [makes one] a medium of His mercy. For this reason God says, "Whoever is given *ḥikmah*, has been given much good." i.e., complete knowledge and that which leads to His mercy.[162]

Citing various interpretations of this verse by earlier authorities, al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/922) appears to be the first to introduce a full-fledged exposition of *ḥikmah*. He paraphrases the verse as, "God gives correctness in speech and act (*iṣābah fī al-qawl wa-al-fi'l*) to whomever among His servants He wills and whoever among them is given such correctness has been given much good." Al-Ṭabarī says that scholars had different views on *ḥikmah* in this verse and lists the following definitions: *ḥikmah* means 1) the Qur'an

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[161] Al-Tustarī, 42.

[162] Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm b. al-Sariyy al-Zajjāj, *Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān wa-i'rābuh*, ed. 'Abd al-Jalīl 'Abduh Shalabī (Beirut, 1973-) I: 350. Another early commentator, Ibn Wahb al-Dīnawarī describes this *ḥikmah* as the prophethood given to Muḥammad. He also asserts that it means exposition of the Qu'ran and correctness in speech and action, as well as thought. 'Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad al-Dīnawarī, *Tafsīr Ibn Wahb, al-musammā al-Wāḍiḥ fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, ed. Aḥmed Farīd (Beirut, 2003) I: 90.

and its comprehension (*al-Qur'ān wa-al-fiqh bihi*),[163] 2) correct speech and action,[164] 3) knowledge of the religion (*'ilm bi-al-dīn*),[165] 4) understanding (*fahm*),[166] 5) pious fear of God (*khashyah*),[167] and 6) prophethood.[168]

Having listed these definitions of *ḥikmah* by earlier authorities, al-Ṭabarī asserts that *ḥikmah* derives from *ḥukm* and that it means correctness/hitting upon the truth (*iṣābah*). He argues that this meaning encompasses all the definitions mentioned above, as *iṣābah* in matters indicates understanding them and having knowledge of them,

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[163] Al-Ṭabarī mentions Ibn 'Abbās, Qatādah, Abū al-'Āliyah, and Mujāhid as having interpreted *ḥikmah* as such. Mujāhid further says that *ḥikmah* does not mean prophethood, but instead denotes the Qur'an, knowledge, and comprehension. Al-Ṭabarī, V: 576-577. Ibn 'Aṭiyyah cites a similar definition, saying that *ḥikmah* means reflecting (*tafakkur*) on God's command[s] and following (*ittibā'*) them. Abū Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Ḥaqq b. 'Aṭiyyah, *al-Muḥarrar al-wajīz fī tafsīr al-Kitāb al-'Azīz*, ed. Aḥmad Ṣādiq al-Mallāḥ (Cairo, 1974) II: 251.

[164] This is the definition by Mujāhid. Al-Ṭabarī, V: 577-578.

[165] Al-Ṭabarī cites Ibn Zayd and Mālik's (b. Anas) interpretations in this regard. Ibn Zayd uses the word *'aql* to define *ḥikmah*, while Mālik asserts that *ḥikmah* means knowledge of the religion, its comprehension, and adherence to it. Al-Ṭabarī, V: 578.

[166] This view belongs to Ibrāhīm al-Nakha'ī. Al-Ṭabarī, V: 578. Al-Sam'ānī further elucidates this definition saying that *ḥikmah* denotes knowledge of the meanings of things and understanding them. Manṣūr b. Muḥammad al-Sam'ānī, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān li-Abī al-Muẓaffar al-Sam'ānī*, eds. Abu Tamīm Yāsir Ibrāhīm and Abū Bilāl Ghanīm b. 'Abbās b. Ghanīm (Riyad, 1997) I: 273.

[167] Al-Ṭabarī quotes al-Rabī''s explanation that, "*ḥikmah* means *khashyah*, because the beginning of everything is the fear of God (*li-anna ra'sa kulli shay'in khashyatu Allāh*)." Al-Rabī' then recites the verse, "*inna-mā yakhshā Allāha min 'ibādihi al-'ulamā'* (Only those of His servants who have knowledge fear God.)" (35:28). Al-Ṭabarī, V: 578; al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manthūr* II: 66. It is related that Sa'īd b. Jubayr (d. 95/713) said, "*khashyah* is *ḥikmah*; whoever has pious fear of God, hits upon the most excellent of *ḥikmah*." Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manthūr* II: 67. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, on the other hand, cites the same saying (*ra's al-ḥikmah khashyat al-rabb*) but attributes it to the prophet David. Aḥmad's narration goes back to Khālid b. Thābit al-Rabi'ī who says, "I have found [an expression] in the beginning (*fātiḥah*) of David's Zabūr [stating] that the beginning of *ḥikmah* is pious fear of God. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Kitāb al-Zuhd*, ed. Muḥammad Jalāl al-Sharaf (Egypt, 1980) I: 155. One may argue that al-Rabi'ī refers to the Solomon's statement in the Old Testament, the Proverbs (1:7), "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge." If this is the case, the word *ḥikmah* is then used in the place of "knowledge" (*ma'rifah*), which occurs in the Arabic version of the Bible (*makhāfat al-Rabb ra's al-ma'rifah*). Another interesting definition is introduced by 'Urwah b. al-Zubayr who says, "kindness (*rifq*) is the beginning of *ḥikmah*." Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manthūr* II: 67.

[168] Al-Suddī is mentioned as having presented this interpretation. Al-Ṭabarī, V: 579.

whether they be related to pious fear of God, prophethood, or comprehension (in other religious matters.)[169]

In addition to the aforementioned six definitions cited by al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Abī Ḥātim (d. 327/939) reports that the word *ḥikmah* in this verse means the Prophetic practice (*sunnah*).[170] He further articulates the first part of the verse (God gives *ḥikmah* to whomever He wills) in the sense of comprehension in the religion by referring to Mālik b. Anas' interpretation of *ḥikmah*. The latter scholar says,

> I think *ḥikmah* means comprehension in the religion of God and it is something that God puts (*yudkhilu*) into hearts out of His mercy and grace. This [occurrence] becomes clear [when] you see a man [who is] intelligent (*'āqil*) [but only] in this-worldly things if he looks into them. And you could find another man who is weak (*ḍa'īf*) in his this-worldly issues [but] knowledgeable of (*'ālim*) and insightful in religious matters. God gives this [ability] to the latter, while He deprives the former of it. Thus *ḥikmah* means comprehension of the religion of God.[171]

As for the second part of the verse (Whoever is given *ḥikmah*, has indeed been given much good), Ibn Abī Ḥātim lists the following interpretations: 1) reciting the Qur'an and reflecting on it;[172] 2) reciting the Qur'an externally or out loud;[173] 3) the Qur'an itself;[174] 4) pious fear of God and knowledge of God;[175] 5) knowledge;[176] and 6)

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[169] Al-Tabari, V, 576-579. Citing most of the abovementioned definitions, Ibn 'Aṭiyyah asserts that with the exception of al-Suddī's explanation (*nubuwwah*), all these interpretations have a similar meaning, for *ḥikmah* is a *maṣdar* derived from *iḥkām* which means perfection (*itqān*) in practice and speech. Therefore, the Book of God is a *ḥikmah*; the *sunnah* of His messenger is a *ḥikmah*; and every definition mentioned above is a part of *ḥikmah* which is a generic noun (*jins*). Ibn 'Aṭiyyah, II: 251-252. See also Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi' li-aḥkām al-Qur'ān* (Cairo, 1967) III: 330-331.

[170] 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad b. Abī Ḥātim, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm: musnadan 'an Rasūl Allāh wa-al-Ṣaḥābah wa-al-Tābi'īn*, ed. As'ad Muḥammad al-Ṭayyib (Mecca, 1997) II: 531-532.

[171] Ibn Abī Ḥātim, II: 532; Ismā'īl b. 'Umar b. Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, ed. Khalīl al-Mays (Beirut, 1983) I: 278; al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manthūr* II: 67.

[172] This view belongs to Abū al-Dardā'. Ibn Abī Ḥātim, II: 533.

[173] Ibn Abī Ḥātim mentions Qatādah as having presented this explanation. Ibn Abī Ḥātim, II: 533.

[174] It is Qatādah, once again, who argues such. Ibn Abī Ḥātim, II: 533.

prophethood.[177] Ibn Abī Ḥātim narrates an account going back to 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Zayd (d. 182/798) describing those who have been given *ḥikmah*. The latter says,

> Among them there is such a person that God gives His *ḥikmah* to his tongue (*lisānih*), though He does not give it to his heart (*qalbih*). And among them there is such a person that God gives His *ḥikmah* to his heart, but not to his tongue. For the former, there is nothing of *ḥikmah* in the heart to practice; thus the practice (*'amal*) does not confirm (*lā yuṣaddiq*) what the tongue utters. The latter practices everything that God makes available for him in his heart regarding *ḥikmah*; as long as *ḥikmah* is not given to his tongue, it is not taken from him. Such a person is beneficial only to himself to the exclusion of the others. The third type of person practices whatever God makes available of *ḥikmah* in his heart, which is the practice of the *ḥukamā'*, and he expresses whatever God makes available of *ḥikmah* on his tongue, which is the speech of the *ḥukamā'*. He is beneficial both to himself as well as to others. That which he speaks through the tongue is a proof of that which exists in the heart; and that which he practices, which is in the heart, regarding *ḥikmah* confirms (*muṣaddiq*) that which he utters.[178]

Al-Samarqandī (d. 375/985) introduces another interpretation of *ḥikmah* in this verse saying that it means the knowledge of Satanic deceptions (*makā'id*) and whisperings (*wasāwis*).[179] Al-Māwardī (d. 450/1058), on the other hand, cites on the authority of Mujāhid an additional meaning of *ḥikmah* as handwriting (*kitābah*). He also asserts that this word refers to this-worldly and other-worldly goodness (*ṣalāḥ*).[180]

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[175] This interpretation is introduced by Maṭar al-Warrāq. Ibn Abī Ḥātim, II: 533.

[176] Mālik b. Anas further elaborates this definition, saying that *ḥikmah* is a light (*nūr*) through which He guides whomever He wills. Ibn Abī Ḥātim, II: 534.

[177] This explanation goes back to Makḥūl, who stated that the Qur'an is one of the seventy-two parts of *nubuwwah* and is thus a *ḥikmah*. Ibn Abī Ḥātim, II: 534. Al-Zamakhsharī introduces a similar interpretation asserting that *ḥikmah* in this verse refers to an agreement between knowledge and its practice. In the presence of God, the *ḥakīm* is the one who combines both knowledge and practice. Al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf 'an ḥaqā'iq al-tanzīl* (Egypt, 1966) I : 396.

[178] Ibn Abī Ḥātim, II: 534.

[179] Abū al-Layth al-Samarqandī, *Tafsīr al-Samarqandī, al-musammā Baḥr al-'ulūm*, eds. 'Alī Muḥammad Mu'awwaḍ, 'Ādil Aḥmad 'Abd al-Mawjūd, and Zakariyyā 'Abd al-Majīd al-Nawutī (Beirut, 1993) I: 232.

[180] 'Alī b. Muḥammad al-Māwardī, *al-Nukat wa-al-'uyūn, tafsīr al-Māwardī*, ed. al-Sayyid b. 'Abd al-Maqṣūd b. 'Abd al-Raḥīm (Beirut, 1992) I: 344-345. Al-Sam'ānī also mentions the definition that *ḥikmah* means handwriting and its knowledge. Al-Sam'ānī, I: 274.

In his own definition of *ḥikmah*, al-Qurṭubī (d. 671/1272) calls attention to the basic meaning of the root, which is *mana'a*. He argues that the origin[al meaning] of *ḥikmah* is that through which one restrains oneself from foolishness (*safah*). *'Ilm* is defined as *ḥikmah* on account of the fact that by means of *'ilm*, one knows how to restrain oneself from foolishness, which refers to every [kind of] bad/evil act. Likewise, the Qur'an, intellect (*'aql*), and understanding (*fahm*) convey *ḥikmah*. Then al-Qurṭubī mentions the following hadith from Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, "For whomever God wants goodness, He makes him comprehend religion" (*man yurid Allāhu bihi khayran yufaqqihhu fī al-dīn*)." In the same context, al-Bukhārī refers to this verse (2:269) and he specifically highlights the word *ḥikmah*. Al-Qurṭubī also cites a hadith from the *Musnad* of al-Dārimī in which *ḥikmah* is mentioned in the following context, "Indeed, God wants to punish the people of the earth, but then when He hears that a teacher is teaching a child *ḥikmah*, He diverts the punishment from them." The narrator says that *ḥikmah* here refers to the Qur'an. Regarding the second part of the verse (*wa- man yu'ta al-ḥikmata fa-qad ūtiya khayran kathīran*), al-Qurṭubī reports that some scholars (*ḥukamā'*) interpreted this part as follows,

> Whoever is given knowledge and the Qur'an should be aware of himself. He should not behave humbly to the possessors of earthly things because of their this-worldly wealth; rather, he has been given something much better than what they possess, for in the Qur'an God says, "The enjoyment (*matā'*) of this world is little (4:77)."[181]

Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1372) makes reference to Abū al-'Āliyah's (d. 90/708) definition of *ḥikmah* as "pious fear of God, because fear of God is the beginning of every *ḥikmah*." In this context, Ibn Kathīr also cites a hadith narrated by Ibn Mas'ūd. The hadith says, "The beginning of *ḥikmah* is fear of God (*ra's al-ḥikmah makhāfat Allāh*)."

[181] Al-Qurṭubī, III: 330-331.

Mentioning al-Suddī's (d. 136/753) description of *ḥikmah* as *nubuwwah*, Ibn Kathīr argues that the truth of the matter – as the majority of scholars asserted – is that *ḥikmah* is more general and exalted than *nubuwwah*; *nubuwwah* and *risālah* (prophetic mission) are more particular, but following the prophets (*anbiyā'*) is a part (*ḥaẓẓ*) of goodness (*khayr*). There are a number of Prophetic statements (*aḥādīth*) to support this argument. A hadith narrated by 'Abd Allāh b. 'Umar (d. 74/692) says, "Whoever memorizes/preserves/is mindful of (*ḥafiẓa*) the Qur'an, *nubuwwah* is placed on his shoulders with the exception that he does not receive revelation."[182] Another hadith handed down by Ibn Mas'ūd reads, "No one should be envied except two [kinds of] persons: a man to whom God gives wealth and he expends it completely in the way of God; and a man to whom God gives *ḥikmah* and he judges by it and teaches it." Al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870), Muslim (d. 261/874), al-Nasā'ī (d. 303/915), and Ibn Mājah (d. 273/886) report this hadith through various chains of transmission.[183]

Of the commentators of the Qur'an that I have consulted so far in this chapter, al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505) provides the longest list of definitions of the word *ḥikmah* in this verse by earlier authorities. He meticulously cites most of the interpretations mentioned above from previous scholars.[184] Al-Suyūṭī refers to the *aḥādīth* in which the word *ḥikmah* and other related concepts are mentioned. He seems to put special emphasis on the experiential aspect of such notions when he cites a hadith reported by Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855) in his *Kitāb al-Zuhd* on the authority of Makḥūl (d. 116/734) saying,

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[182] Al-Qurṭubī, III: 331; al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manthūr* II: 69.

[183] Ibn Kathīr, I: 278.

[184] Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manthūr* II: 66-71.

"The Messenger of God said that whoever worships God sincerely for forty days, the springs of *ḥikmah* gush out from his heart up to his tongue."[185] Al-Ṭabarānī (d. 360/970) recounts the following hadith,

> The Messenger of God said that Luqmān told his son, "O my son, you should sit with the scholars (*'ulamā'*) and listen to the words of the *ḥukamā'*, for God gives new life to the dead heart through the light of *ḥikmah*, just as a dead land is given new life by means of a downpour."[186]

Regarding the idea of comprehension (*fiqh*) in the religion, which is noted as one of the definitions of *ḥikmah*, al-Suyūṭī makes reference to a hadith reported by al-Bukhārī, Muslim, and al-Nasā'ī. The hadith reads, "The Messenger of God said that for whomever God wills good(ness), He makes him comprehending with respect to religion (*yufaqqihhu fī al-dīn*)."[187] The Prophet said, "Two characteristics are not joined in a hypocrite (*munāfiq*): seemly behavior and comprehension in religion."[188] He also stated, "There is no better way of worshipping God than [having] comprehension in religion; a single *faqīh* is harder on Satan than a thousand [ordinary] worshippers. For everything there is a pillar and the pillar of this religion is *fiqh*." The narrator of this last hadith, Abū Hurayrah, says that sitting for a while to gain comprehension is preferable to him than spending the whole night till the morning in worship.[189] In the same context, al-Suyūṭī cites a hadith related by al-Ṭabarānī saying, "The Messenger of God said that the noblest

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[185] Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manthūr* II: 69. Apparently, al-A'mash was talking about the same experiential and practical aspect of *ḥikmah* when he described al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī saying, "Ḥasan would keep devoting his attention to *ḥikmah* until he spoke in terms of it (*mā zāla al-Ḥasan ya'tanī bi-al-ḥikmah ḥattā naṭaqa bihā*)." Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Editor's introduction, 21.

[186] Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manthūr* II: 69.

[187] Ibid., II: 70.

[188] Ibid., II, 71.

[189] Ibid., II, 71.

devotion (*'ibādah*) is *fiqh* and the noblest religion is piety (*wara'*)."[190] Another hadith narrated by Ḥudhayfah b. al-Yamān (d. 36/656) explicates the notions of *'ilm* and *wara'*, which are again among the definitions of *ḥikmah*, as follows, "The Messenger of God said that the merit of *'ilm* is better than the merit of worship (*'ibādah*), and the best of your religion is *wara'*."[191] Similarly the Prophet said, "A little [bit of] knowledge is better than a large amount of worship."[192]

Considering all these interpretations, it is not easy to give a single-word definition of the word *ḥikmah* mentioned in verse 2:269. It is of a highly inclusive character. By no means does this fact imply that introducing multiple meanings refers to a kind of inconsistency or contradiction among various understandings. Rather, they are complementary to each other, as can be observed in the following Prophetic statement reported by Ibn 'Aṭiyyah (d. 543/1148), "One cannot reach comprehension completely until he discerns in the Qur'an numerous dimensions (*lā yafqahu al-rajulu kulla al-fiqhi ḥattā yarā li-al-qur'āni wujūhan kathīratan*)."[193] One may regard *ḥikmah* in the verse 2:269, therefore, as the rationale or underlying reason of Qur'anic regulations in a general sense. Accordingly, Gutas' argument that *ḥikmah* in this verse, once again, means "maxim" [194] does not seem to be a complete and proper understanding of the word.

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[190] Ibid., II, 70.

[191] Ibid., II, 70.

[192] Ibid., II, 70.

[193] Ibn 'Aṭiyyah, I: 44-45.

[194] Gutas, "Classical Arabic Wisdom Literature," 54.

Reducing its meaning merely to "maxim" and treating it without paying attention to its context, does not offer a convincing meaning.

II. *Hikmah* as a method of calling to the way of the Lord

In 16:125, the word *ḥikmah* occurs in the framework of the principles of religious teaching. This section of the *sūrah* begins with mention of the qualifications of Abraham. He was a nation/model/leader (*ummah*) obedient to God, a man of pure faith and not an idolater, showing thankfulness for His blessings; God chose him and guided him to a straight path. God gave him goodness (*ḥasanah*) in this world and he will be among the righteous in the world to come. So God revealed to Muḥammad that he should follow the religion (*millah*) of Abraham (16:120-123). The next verse deals with the Sabbath[195] which was appointed only for those who differed over it. Indeed God will decide between them on the Day of Resurrection concerning their disputes.[196] Then the Qur'an says (16:125), "Call to the way of your Lord with *ḥikmah* and good admonition, and argue with them in the best way. Surely your Lord knows very well those who have strayed from His way, and He knows very well those who are (rightly) guided."

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[195] *Tafsīr* scholars relate narrations regarding the Israelites' constant dispute with their Prophet (Moses) with respect to heavenly instructions, i.e., regarding which day was the true Sabbath. Was it Friday, Saturday, or Sunday? See, for instance, al-Samarqandī, II: 255 and Ibn al-Jawzī, II: 592-593.

[196] In his translation of the Qur'an, *The Holy Qur'an*, 'Abdullāh Yūsuf 'Alī reads this verse in connection with a possible argument presented by the Jews who could say to Muḥammad, "Why don't you then observe the Sabbath?" The Qur'anic answer is twofold: first, the Sabbath has nothing to do with Abraham, for it was instituted at the time of Moses; and second, there is no agreement among the Israelites on the actual day on which the Sabbath falls. The Qur'an instructs the Prophet to avoid such endless disputes which will never be settled until the Day of Judgment.

Early *tafsīr* authorities argue that the word *ḥikmah* in this verse denotes the Qur'an, as asserted by Ibn 'Abbās.[197] Al-Ṭabarī states that the expression *bi-al-ḥikmah* means through the revelation of God to the Prophet and His Book that He sends down to him.[198] Al-Sam'ānī (d. 489/1095) mentions another interpretation, saying that *ḥikmah* is knowledge of things according to their rankings regarding goodness and evilness. He also reports that calling by *ḥikmah* means turning away from evil to good through knowledge.[199] Scholars list other meanings of *ḥikmah* such as prophethood[200] and comprehension.[201]

As for the expression *maw'iẓah ḥasanah*, commentators report that it is closely related to the Qur'an and its admonitions.[202] Al-Ṭabarī says that it means that the Prophet should call to the way of God with good expressions that God has set as a proof in His Book against the disputers.[203] Along the same line, other authorities interpret *maw'iẓah ḥasanah* as polite speech and a comely attitude without being rude and offensive.[204] The

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[197] Muqātil, *Tafsīr* II: 494; al-Tustarī, 42; al-Huwwārī, II: 395; al-Dīnawarī, I: 448; al-Ṭabarī, XIV: 194; al-Samarqandī, II: 255; Ibn al-Jawzī, II: 593; al-Māwardī, III: 220; al-Sam'ānī, III: 210; al-Baghawī, III: 90.

[198] Al-Ṭabarī, XIV: 194.

[199] Al-Sam'ānī, III: 210.

[200] Ibn al-Jawzī, II: 593.

[201] Al-Samarqandī, II: 255; Ibn al-Jawzī, II: 593; al-Māwardī, III: 220.

[202] Muqātil, *Tafsīr* II: 494; al-Huwwārī, II: 395; al-Dinawarī, I: 448; al-Samarqandī, II: 255; Ibn al-Jawzī, II: 593; al-Sam'ānī, III: 210; al-Baghawī, III: 90.

[202] Muqātil, *Tafsīr* II: 531.

[202] Al-Samarqandī, II: 269.

[202] Ibn al-Jawzī, III: 25.

[203] Al-Ṭabarī, XIV: 194.

[204] Ibn al-Jawzī, II: 593; al-Sam'ānī, III: 210; al-Baghawī, III: 90.

object pronoun *hum* in *wa-jādilhum* might refer either to the people of Mecca or to the People of the Book.[205]

Together with the word *maw'iẓah ḥasanah*, *ḥikmah* in this verse seems to indicate general principles of religious invitation, which should be reasonable as well as considerate, but not contentious. Such invitation should avoid going into endless discussions regarding previous controversial issues in religion. A believer is expected to try his best to present his religion intellectually as well as practically. After all, in the final analysis, only God knows who is right and who is wrong. Having discussed the word *ḥikmah* in these two Qur'anic instances as applicable basically to every individual, I shall in the following lines focus on the more particular connotations of this concept with regard to certain historical religious groups and personalities.

III. *Hikmah* as a Divine blessing and grace given to the Prophets in general and to those from Abraham's progeny in particular

In 2:129 the prayer of Abraham and his son Ishmael is cited. According to the Qur'anic statements, when the two were raising up the foundations of the House (Ka'bah) they uttered (2:127-129),

> Our Lord, accept [this service] from us; You are the All-hearing, the All-knowing. Our Lord, make us submissive (*muslimayn*) to You and of our progeny a nation submissive to You. And show us our holy rites and accept our repentance. Indeed, You are the Accepting of repentance, the All-compassionate. Our Lord, send among them a Messenger, one of them, who will recite to them Your signs, and teach them the *kitāb* and *ḥikmah*, and purify them; You are the All-mighty, the All-wise.

According to the majority of the early commentators on the Qur'an, the word *kitāb* in this verse refers to the Qur'an.[206] Ibn Abī Ḥātim reports another explanation

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[205] Ibn al-Jawzī, II: 593.

handed down from Ibn 'Abbās who stated that *kitāb* here means handwriting (*khaṭṭ bi-al-qalam*).[207] As for the word *ḥikmah*, *tafsīr* scholars list various explanations, such as, 1) the Prophetic practice (*sunnah*),[208] 2) admonitions (*mawā'iẓ*) found in the Qur'an regarding lawful and unlawful things,[209] 3) knowledge (*ma'rifah*) and comprehension (*fiqh*) in religious matters and adherence to the religion[210], 4) the religion (*dīn*) that cannot be known/understood without explanation by the Prophet,[211] 5) intellect (*'aql*) in religion,[212] 6) something that God puts in the heart through which He enlightens it[213] or a disposition (*sajiyyah*) and light (*nūr*) from God,[214] and 7) understanding and interpreting the Qur'an.[215]

Al-Ṭabarī further asserts that the word *ḥikmah* in this verse means the knowledge of God's judgments (*'ilm bi-aḥkām Allāh*), knowledge of which it is not possible to

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[206] Muqātil, *Tafsīr* I: 69; al-Huwwārī, I: 150; al-Dīnawarī, I: 46; al-Ṭabarī, III: 86-88; Ibn Abī Ḥātim, I: 236-237; al-Samarqandī, I: 158-159; Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh b. Abī Zamanayn, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīz li-Ibn Abī Zamanayn*, eds. Abū 'Abd Allāh Ḥusayn b. 'Ukāshah and Muḥammad b. Muṣṭafā al-Kanz (Cairo, 2002) I: 179; Ibn al-Jawzī, I: 113; al-Māwardī, I: 192; al-Sam'ānī, I: 141; al-Baghawī, I: 116-117; Ibn 'Aṭiyyah, I: 423-424; al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf* I: 312; Maḥmūd b. Abī al-Ḥasan al-Naysābūrī, *Ījāz al-bayān 'an ma'ānī al-Qur'ān*, ed. 'Alī b. Sulaymān al-'Ubayd (Riyad,1997) I: 119.

[207] Ibn Abī Ḥātim, I: 236-237.

[208] Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, I: 115. See also, al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manthūr* I: 335; al-Huwwārī, I: 150; al-Dīnawarī, I: 46; al-Ṭabarī, III: 86-88; Ibn Abī Ḥātim, I: 236-237; Ibn Abī Zamanayn, I: 179; Ibn al-Jawzī, I: 113; al-Māwardī, I: 192; al-Baghawī, I: 116-117; Ibn 'Aṭiyyah, I: 423-424.

[209] Muqātil, *Tafsīr* I: 69; al-Samarqandī, I: 158-159; al-Baghawī, I: 116-117.

[210] Al-Ṭabarī, III: 86-88; al-Māwardī, I: 192.

[211] Al-Ṭabarī, III: 86-88.

[212] Ibid.,, III: 86-88.

[213] Ibid., III: 86-88.

[214] Ibn 'Aṭiyyah, I: 423-424.

[215] Al-Samarqandī, I: 158-159; al-Sam'ānī, I: 141; al-Baghawī, I: 116-117.

obtain without explanation by the Prophet. In al-Ṭabarī's view, *ḥikmah* is derived from the word *ḥukm* which means separating the true from the false (*faṣl bayn al-ḥaqq wa-al-bāṭil*). The morphological pattern of the word *ḥikmah* is similar to the words *jilsah* and *qi'dah* which are derived from *julūs* and *qu'ūd*, respectively. The following expression testifies to this usage, "indeed such-and-such a person is *ḥakim*, clear of *ḥikmah* (*inna fulān la-ḥakīm bayyin al-ḥikmah*) i.e., his correctness in speech and action is evident (*innahu la-bayyin al-iṣābah fī al-qawl wa-al-fi'l*). Al-Ṭabarī concludes that if this is the case, then this verse can be interpreted as,

> Our Lord, send among them a Messenger, one of them, who will recite to them Your signs, and teach them Your Book that You have sent down to them and [teach them how to] distinguish Your decision and judgments (*faṣl qaḍā'ik wa-aḥkāmik*) that You teach him.[216]

According to Ibn Abī Ḥātim's statements, in addition to being explained by al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and some other early authorities as *sunnah*, the word *ḥikmah* is interpreted as prophethood (*nubuwwah*) and intellect or understanding in the religion by al-Suddī and Zayd b. Aslam (d. 136/753), respectively. Abū al-Layth al-Samarqandī defines the word *ḥakīm* at the end of the verse by explaining that "His acts are in agreement with His knowledge (*'amaluhu muwāfiq li-al-'ilm*)."[217] Referring to its basic meaning, Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1200) asserts that *ḥikmah* is called *ḥikmah* on account of the fact that it guards against ignorance (*tamna' min al-jahl*).[218] In the same context, al-Sam'ānī cites Ibn Durayd's aforementioned definition of the word *ḥikmah* as follows, "Every word that

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[216] Al-Ṭabarī, III: 86-88.

[217] Al-Samarqandī, I: 158-159.

[218] Ibn al-Jawzī, I: 113.

restrains, exhorts, and deters you from a disgraceful thing and calls you to a good thing is *ḥikmah*."[219]

Summarizing the previous expositions of the word *ḥikmah* in this verse, al-Baghawī (d. 516/1122) lists various definitions as follows: *ḥikmah* means, 1) understanding (*fahm*) the Qur'an, as Mujāhid maintained; 2) the admonitions (*mawā'iẓ*) of the Qur'an and that which exists in it regarding religious judgments (*aḥkām*), as Muqātil asserted; 3) knowledge together with action, since one cannot be called *ḥakīm* unless he combines the two, as Ibn Qutaybah argued; 4) the *sunnah* and religious judgments; 5) judgment or judicial decision (*qaḍā'*); 6) comprehension (*fiqh*)." Al-Baghawī further cites Ibn Durayd's aforementioned definition to conclude his interpretation.[220]

Al-Zamakhsharī, on the other hand, does not seem to give special attention to the meaning of the word *ḥikmah* here. He analyzes *ḥikmah* in a legal context saying that it means religious law (*sharī'ah*) and explanation of religious judgments (*bayān al-aḥkām*).[221] Similarly, al-Naysābūrī (d. 553/1158) argues that *ḥikmah* means knowledge of religious judgments (*'ilm bi-al-aḥkām*).[222]

Seeing all these definitions of *ḥikmah* in this verse, one can conclude that the early authorities on *tafsīr* introduce expositions very similar to those of the aforementioned Qur'anic instances. They use their arguments regarding *ḥikmah*

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[219] Al-Sam'ānī, I: 141.

[220] Al-Baghawī, I: 116-117.

[221] Al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf* I: 312.

[222] Al-Naysābūrī, I: 119.

interchangeably among different verses. This, once again, indicates their understanding of this concept in a highly inclusive manner. Their interpretations do not seem to be exclusive of each other; instead, they appear to be complementary. The fact that *ḥikmah* was given to Abraham's progeny is also mentioned in the following Qur'anic instance.

In 4:54 the words *kitāb* and *ḥikmah* occur in a context related to the People of the Book, especially to the Jews of that time. The Qur'an criticizes their attitude with regard to Islam. Upon being asked (by the polytheists of Quraysh) about their opinion regarding Islam and its members, they said that the (Qurayshī) unbelievers were more rightly guided than the (Muslims) believers (4:51).[223] Given the fact that they were given a portion of the Book, and thus had a taste and experience of the heavenly message, their evaluation of the two groups in this manner was seen as a very blameworthy attitude indeed. The following verses (4:53-54) say,

> Or have they a share of the Kingdom (*mulk*)? If that is so, they do not give the people [even as much as] a single date-spot. Or are they jealous of the people for the bounty that God has given them? Yet We gave the people of Abraham the *kitāb* and *ḥikmah*, and We gave them a mighty kingdom. Some of them believed in it, and some of them disbelieved in it.

Then the Qur'an declares that both those who disbelieve and those who believe in God's signs will reap the harvest of their positions as punishment and reward, respectively (4:56-57).

Commentators assert that the "jealous ones" were the Jews during the Prophet's lifetime, since they did not like the fact that prophecy had been sent to Muḥammad (and

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[223] As the occasion of the revelation (*sabab al-nuzūl*) of this verse, *tafsīr* scholars record that some unbelievers from the Quraysh asked a group of Jews, including Ka'b b. al-Ashraf, questions regarding whether the formers' own religion or the religion of Muḥammad was more rightly guided. Ka'b responded that the religion of the Quraysh was better than Islam, whereupon this verse was revealed to the Prophet. See, for instance, Ibn al-Jawzī, I: 419-420; al-Sam'ānī, I: 436; al-Baghawī, I: 441.

thus to the Arabs) rather than to themselves.[224] The *kitāb* given to the people of Abraham refers to the Book that God revealed to Abraham and his successors in prophethood – Moses and other prophets from among Abraham's progeny.[225] As far as the word *ḥikmah* in this verse is concerned, the majority of the early *tafsīr* authorities assert that it means prophethood (*nubuwwah*).[226] Al-Ṭabarī, on the other hand, argues that *ḥikmah* refers to that which was revealed to the people of Abraham in a form other than that of a recited book (*kitāb maqrū'*).[227] *Ḥikmah* is further defined as knowledge and understanding,[228] comprehension in religion,[229] and the *sunnah*.[230]

Another noteworthy thing mentioned in the verse as having been given to the people of Abraham is *mulk 'aẓīm* (a mighty kingdom). Scholars deal with this point also and put forth various explanations as follows. 1) Mujāhid and al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī define this expression as prophethood (*nubuwwah*).[231] 2) Al-Suddī asserts that *mulk 'aẓīm* refers to the historical fact that David and Solomon were allowed to marry many women, this privilege constituting the *mulk 'aẓīm*. In his view, the aforementioned Jews had a double

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[224] Al-Ṭabarī, VIII: 476-480; Ibn al-Jawzī, I: 420-421; al-Baghawī, I: 442. A Shiite commentator, Ibn Furāt al-Kūfī (3rd/9th century) argues that just like the *Āl Ibrāhīm*, the members of the Prophet Muḥammad's family (*ahl al-bayt*) were given special heavenly characteristics, such as sanctity (*walāyah*). Thus the *ahl al-bayt* represent the envied ones (*maḥṣūdūn*) meant in this verse. Ibn Furāt al-Kūfī, *Tafsīr Furāt al-Kūfī*, ed. Muḥammad al-Kāẓim (Beirut, 1992) I: 106-107.

[225] Al-Ṭabarī, VIII: 480-82; Ibn al-Jawzī, I: 421; al-Sam'ānī, I: 437; al-Baghawī, I: 442.

[226] Muqātil, *Tafsīr* I: 243; al-Huwwārī, I: 390; al-Dinawarī, I: 156; al-Samarqandī, I: 360-361; Ibn Abī Zamanayn, I: 381; Ibn al-Jawzī, I: 421; al-Sam'ānī, I: 437; al-Baghawī, I: 442.

[227] Al-Ṭabarī, VIII: 480.

[228] Al-Samarqandī, I: 360-361.

[229] Ibn al-Jawzī, I: 421.

[230] Al-Sam'ānī, I: 437.

[231] Mujāhid b. Jabr, 284; al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, I: 284; al-Ṭabarī, VIII: 480-481.

standard, for they considered the fact that David and Solomon were married to innumerable – perhaps even more than a hundred – women as legitimate for David and Solomon, while on the other hand, they did not view the same thing as legitimate for the Prophet Muḥammad, who married a far smaller number (nine) of women.[232] 3) Relying on Ibn 'Abbās' definition, some scholars argue that *mulk 'aẓīm* indicates the mighty kingdom that God gave to Solomon, the son of David in this world.[233] 4) On the authority of Hammām b. al-Hārith, some other commentators argue that this expression means that the people of Abraham were supported divinely by angels and armies.[234] Having listed all these four interpretations, al-Ṭabarī asserts that the most suitable one is that of Ibn 'Abbās, for according to Arabic linguistic convention, the word *mulk* is more properly used in this sense.[235] Ibn al-Jawzī further elucidates this usage, mentioning that *mulk 'aẓīm* means combining this-worldly administration (*siyāsat al-dunyā*) with legal religious determination (*shar' al-dīn*).[236]

Alongside the Abrahamic Prophets in particular, the Qur'an states that the Prophets in general, without identifying them, were given *ḥikmah*. When God took the covenant (*mīthāq*) of the Prophets, He reminded them that He had given them *kitāb* and *ḥikmah*. These heavenly gifts would require the Prophets to confirm and support a Messenger to come. According to the Qur'anic statements, they agreed to this and took

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[232] Ibn Qutaybah, *Tafsīr gharīb al-Qur'ān*, 129; al-Ṭabarī, VIII: 481; al-Samarqandī, I: 361; Ibn Abī Zamanayn, I: 381; Ibn al-Jawzī, I: 421; al-Māwardī, I: 497; al-Sam'ānī, I: 437; al-Baghawī, I: 442.

[233] Al-Ṭabarī, VIII: 481; Ibn al-Jawzī, I: 421; al-Māwardī, I: 497; al-Sam'ānī, I: 437.

[234] Al-Ṭabarī, VIII: 481-482; Ibn al-Jawzī, I: 421; al-Māwardī, I: 497; al-Sam'ānī, I: 437.

[235] Al-Ṭabarī, VIII: 482.

[236] Ibn al-Jawzī, I: 421.

God's covenant as binding upon them. This was evidently a metaphysical and non-temporal event to which an ordinary person does not have any access. Nevertheless, I shall attempt to contextualize these verses.

In 3:81, the context reveals that *kitāb* and *ḥikmah* are treated in the framework of the Qur'anic approach to some of the People of the Book.[237] The Qur'an invites the People of the Book to common ground on the condition that neither party would worship other than God; likewise, they would not associate anything with Him as Lord (3:64). The Qur'an criticizes the People of the Book for their disputation concerning Abraham, who had lived before the Torah and Gospel were revealed. They should not dispute on matters of which they have no knowledge. In fact, Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian, but he was a Muslim [or a self-submissing person to God] of pure faith, and he was never of the polytheists. The people standing closest to Abraham are those who followed him, and this Prophet, and those who believe. There is a party of the People of the Book who wish that they could mislead the Prophet, yet they mislead only themselves, while they are not aware. The Qur'an condemns the People of the Book for their disbelief in the signs of God, which they themselves witness. They should not confound the truth with falsehood, and they should not conceal the truth while they have knowledge of it (3:65-71). The true guidance is God's guidance and the bounty is in His hand; He gives it to whom He wills; and God is All-embracing, All-knowing. He singles out for His mercy whom He wills; God is the possessor of great bounty (3:73-74). But the People of the Book are not of a single kind; among them are the trustworthy as well as the perfidious (3:75). Then the Qur'an explains the appropriate attitude expected from

[237]Unlike in the rest of the instances, the words *kitāb* and *ḥikmah* in this verse are indefinite, though there is another Qur'anic instance (54:5) in which only the word *ḥikmah*, without *kitāb*, occurs in the indefinite.

a Prophet towards his mission. It is not for a mortal that God should give him the *kitāb*, *ḥukm*, and prophethood and that he should then say to the people, "Be worshippers/servants (*'ibād*) of mine rather than God's;" on the contrary (he would say), "Be pious scholars of the Lord (*rabbāniyyīn*) because of what you have taught of the *kitāb* and because of what you have studied." The former does not order people to take angels and prophets as Lord (3:79-80). Within this context, the following two verses (seemingly addressing the People of the Book[238]) read,

> And when God took the covenant of the prophets [saying]: "I have given you of *kitāb* and *ḥikmah*; then there comes to you a Messenger confirming what is with you, you [must] believe in him and support him." He (God) said, "Do you agree and take My covenant as binding on you?" They said, "We do agree." He (God) said, "Bear witness so, and I will be with you among the witnesses." Then whoever turns his back after that, they are the ungodly.

The Qur'an continues its disapproval of the People of the Book because of their disbelief in the religion of God (Islam) and concludes that if they persist in doing so, they will not end up in a happy situation (3:83-91).

According to the authorities of *tafsīr* to whom I have referred so far, this verse does not introduce any additional dimension to the meanings of the words *kitāb* and *ḥikmah* that have been discussed in the previous Qur'anic instances. Some scholars, however, interpret these words as referring to the Torah and that which is in it regarding what is lawful and unlawful.[239]

Of the Abrahamic Prophets, the Qur'an singles out David as having been given *ḥikmah* as well as this-worldly authority (*mulk*). In Islamic literature, accordingly, he is highly esteemed as an ideal ruler who combined and practiced spiritual and political leaderships in a perfect manner.

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[238] Al-Ṭabarī, VI: 552-559.

[239] Muqātil, *Tafsīr* I: 180; al-Dinawarī, I: 115; al-Samarqandī, I: 281.

IV. *Ḥikmah* and authority: the case of David

In 2:251 the context tells the story of the Children of Israel after Moses when they said to their prophet (Samuel) that he should appoint a king for them in order to fight in the way of God. The prophet was hesitant to do so, since he was in doubt that they would change their minds with respect to such a duty. The Children of Israel insisted on their demand, arguing that they had plausible reasons to fight in God's way, for they had been expelled from their lands and children (2:246). When the Prophet informed them that God had appointed Saul (Ṭālūt) as their leader, the Children of Israel were not pleased with this decision and they raised some petty objections with him. They argued that Saul's social position was inferior to theirs, seeing that he had not been given an amplitude of wealth. The Prophet, on the other hand, challenged the basis of their argument saying that God was the only authority to decide who would be given kingship (*mulk*). God chose Saul over them and increased him greatly in mental and physical powers (2:247). When Saul went forth with the soldiers, many of them attempted to find excuses to retrace their steps, thinking that they had no chance against Goliath (Jālūt) and his forces. Only a small group of Saul's soldiers remained steadfast in their promise. They faced the enemy with all their conviction, sincerity, and prayers (2:249-250). The following verse reads,

> They defeated them by the will of God and David slew Goliath; and God gave him (David) kingship (*mulk*) and *ḥikmah*, and He taught him whatever (else) He willed. Had God not driven the people back, some by means of others, the earth would have surely been corrupted; but God is full of bounty to the worlds.

The majority of the early commentators interpret the word *mulk* and *ḥikmah* in this verse as kingship (*mulk*)[240] and prophethood (*nubuwwah*),[241] respectively. Some use the word *sulṭān* to define the word *mulk*.[242] It seems that they try to put a specific emphasis on the type of kingship involved, which is apparently a this-worldly one. David was the first to combine kingship and prophethood in the history of the Children of Israel. Before him, kingship had belonged to one tribe (*sibṭ*) of the Israelites and prophethood to another.[243] By the time of David's reign, the Israelites had become a great kingdom to such an extent that none of the previous Israelite leaders before David had ever ruled over such a large land.[244]

In addition to their definition of the word *ḥikmah* as prophethood, some scholars present a complementary argument saying that *ḥikmah* here refers to the book given to David, i.e., the Zabūr.[245] *Ḥikmah* also means understanding (*fahm*)[246] and intellect (*'aql*) in religion.[247] It is further said that *mulk* and *ḥikmah* together in this verse denote knowledge accompanied by action.[248] Al-Māwardī mentions a second aspect of this

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[240] Al-Ḍaḥḥāk, I: 213; Muqātil, *Tafsīr* I: 132; al-Dinawarī, I: 83; al-Sam'ānī, I: 254; al-Baghawī, I: 235; al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf* I: 382.

[241] Al-Ḍaḥḥāk, I: 213; al-Tustarī, 42; al-Dīnawarī, I: 83; al-Huwwārī, I: 237; al-Ṭabarī, V: 371; Ibn Abī Ḥātim, II: 480; al-Samarqandī, I: 221; Ibn al-Jawzī, I: 227; al-Māwardī, I: 320-321; al-Sam'ānī, I: 254; al-Baghawī, I: 235; al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf* I: 382.

[242] Al-Ṭabarī, V: 371; al-Māwardī, 1: 320-321.

[243] Al-Ḍaḥḥāk, I: 213; al-Sam'ānī, I: 254; al-Baghawī, I: 235.

[244] Al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf* I: 382.

[245] Muqātil, *Tafsīr* I: 132; al-Samarqandī, I: 221; Ibn al-Jawzī, I: 227.

[246] Al-Dinawarī, I: 83.

[247] Ibn Abī Ḥātim, II: 480.

[248] Al-Sam'ānī, I: 254; al-Baghawī, I: 235.

combination as he argues that *mulk* means the submission (*inqiyād*) to his (David's) command(s) and *ḥikmah* means uprightness in David's behavior (*sīratih*). This happened after the death of Saul when David was left unaccompanied to deal with the Israelites' affairs.[249]

In 38:20 the word *ḥikmah* appears in relation to David in a context similar to that of 2:251. As the occasion of revelation of the verses in this section of the *sūrah*, commentators point to the situation of the Meccan unbelievers who were constantly deriding the Prophet's message and statements. When verses 69:19-27 were revealed, the Meccan unbelievers sarcastically hastened forth the punishment promised in these verses. The verses describe an eschatological scene in which people will be given their book of deeds in their right or left hands depending on their deeds in this world; in the Hereafter, they will be rewarded or punished, respectively. Considering themselves among those whose books will be given to them in their left hands, the Meccan unbelievers took to mocking, saying that they were ready for the punishment and there was no reason to delay it (38:15-16). Hereupon, the section of *sūrah* 38 in which the word *ḥikmah* is mentioned was revealed.[250] The Prophet is instructed that he should be patient at what they say and remember the story of David who was a man of might and penitence (38:19). The relation between the case of David and that of Muḥammad could be the fact that they both required some time before receiving this-worldly power and thus realizing their promises. Apparently, David was not known as a heroic person before he slew Goliath and some people had ridiculed his eagerness to face Goliath before that time. In

[249] Al-Māwardī, I: 320-321.

[250] Ibn al-Jawzī, III: 562-563; al-Baghawī, IV: 50-51.

the background of this story, the following verse reads, "We strengthened his kingdom (*mulk*) and gave him *ḥikmah* and decisive speech (*faṣl al-khiṭāb*)."

Early scholars of *tafsīr* introduce various definitions of the word *ḥikmah* in this verse. On the authority of Ibn 'Abbās, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, and Ibn Zayd, commentators report that *ḥikmah* means understanding (*fahm*) and knowledge.[251] On the authority of Qatādah and al-Suddī, they assert that it denotes *sunnah*[252] and prophethood,[253] respectively. Yet other scholars define *ḥikmah* as correctness in [all] affairs,[254] justice (*'adl*),[255] virtue (*faḍl*) and perspicacity (*fiṭnah*).[256] Al-Zamakhsharī argues that *ḥikmah* here refers to the Zabūr and knowledge of religious laws (*'ilm al-sharā'i'*). He also reports that every word that is consistent with the truth (*ḥaqq*) is *ḥikmah*.[257]

As for the expression *faṣl al-khiṭāb*, scholars analyze it together with *ḥikmah* and list a number of definitions of this combination. Before going into their interpretations, I would like to refer to Gutas' understanding of the word *ḥikmah* in this verse as "the vision of God."[258] He apparently translates al-Farrā's (d. 207/822) definition of *ḥikmah* on the authority of Mujāhid as *shuhūd*. Gutas' translation and understanding of this

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[251] Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, II: 239; Zayd b. 'Alī, 270; Muqātil, *Tafsīr* III: 639; al-Tustarī, 42; Ibn Wahb, I: 9; al-Ṭabarī, XXIII: 139; al-Samarqandī, III: 132; Ibn al-Jawzī, III: 564; al-Māwardī, V: 84.

[252] Al-Ṭabarī, XXIII: 139; Ibn al-Jawzī, III: 564; al-Māwardī, V: 84.

[253] Al-Tustarī, 42; Ibn Wahb, I: 9; al-Ṭabarī, XXIII: 139; al-Samarqandī, III: 132; Ibn al-Jawzī, III: 564; al-Māwardī, V: 84; al-Baghawī, IV: 52.

[254] Ibn al-Jawzī, III: 564; al-Baghawī, IV: 52.

[255] Al-Māwardī, V: 84.

[256] Ibid., V: 84.

[257] Al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf* II: 365.

[258] Gutas, "Classical Arabic Wisdom Literature," 52.

expression seem to be a very good example of how one can misread a concept and thus mislead oneself, if one does not pay sufficient attention to the contextual and interdisciplinary elements in a text. As I will explain in the following lines, al-Farrā's definition (*shuhūd*) has nothing to do with "the vision of God," though the word *shuhūd* can be used as a *maṣdar* of the verb *sh-h-d* in this sense, in addition to its usage as a plural of the noun *shāhid* (witness), which is what al-Farrā' means in this passage. By this word, he is simply referring to the legal rule of "witnessing" in the context of litigation. According to this rule on litigation, the presentation of witnesses (*shuhūd*) falls to the plaintiff (*mudda'ī*) and taking oaths falls upon the defendant (*mudda'ā 'alayh*). Had Gutas paid attention to the word right next to *shuhūd* in al-Farrā's text which is "oaths" (*aymān*), he could have saved himself from such a misunderstanding. Furthermore, in such texts, in order to refer to the concept of "vision of God", the word *mushāhadah* (the *maṣdar* of the third form of the root *sh-h-d*), rather than *shuhūd* (the *masḍar* of the first form of the same root), is generally used.[259] In any case, I should now like to return to the discussions by early authorities of the expression *faṣl al-khiṭāb* in this verse.

Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī is reported as saying that this expression means understanding regarding judgment (*'ilm fī al-qaḍā'*).[260] Similarly, Zayd b. 'Alī explains it as knowledge of judgment (*'ilm bi-al-qaḍā'*). He also states that the combination of *ḥikmah* and *faṣl al-*

[259] At the same time, considering his general personal and intellectual stance in Islamic scholarly tradition, I would not think that al-Farrā' would use this word meaning such a Sufi tone.

[260] Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, II: 239; al-Huwwārī, IV: 10. Al-Ṭabarī attributes the same interpretation to Mujāhid and al-Suddī, saying that the two defined *faṣl al-khiṭāb* as knowledge of judgment and understanding it. Al-Ṭabarī, XXIII: 140. On the authority of Ibn 'Abbās, Ibn al-Jawzī relates that this expression refers to knowledge of judgment and justice. Ibn al-Jawzī, III: 564. Likewise, al-Baghawī reports Ibn Mas'ūd's explanation that *faṣl al-khiṭāb* denotes knowledge of judgment and insightfulness (*tabaṣṣur*) therein. Al-Baghawī, IV: 52.

khiṭāb means witnesses (*shuhūd*) and oaths (*aymān*).[261] Ibn Qutaybah explicates this definition saying that *faṣl al-khiṭāb* means witnessing and oaths on account of the fact that judgment is determined depending on them.[262] On the same point, al-Ṭabarī, on the authority of Shurayḥ (d. 85/704), reports that *faṣl al-khiṭāb* indicates that in a legal argument, proof is upon the plaintiff (*mudda'ī*) while swearing an oath is on the defendant (*mudda'ā 'alayh*).[263] Ibn al-Jawzī likes this explanation, stating that a dispute is clarified through this process.[264] Muqātil and 'Abd al-Razzāq (d. 211/827) argue that *faṣl al-khiṭāb* means *faṣl al-qadā'* (decisive judgment).[265] Some scholars, including al-Farrā' and Ibn Qutaybah, assert that *faṣl al-khiṭāb* refers also to the expression *ammā ba'd*,[266] which is used as a transitional phrase between two topics, especially after praising God, in a text.[267] It is also related that Ibn 'Abbās defined *faṣl al-khiṭāb* as explaining the word (*bayān al-kalām*).[268] Summarizing the previous explanations, al-Ṭabarī concludes that the word *faṣl* means *qaṭ'* (cutting) and that the expression thus

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[261] Zayd b. 'Alī, 270; Yaḥyā b. Ziyād al-Farrā', *Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān*, eds. Aḥmad Yūsuf al-Najātī and Muḥammad 'Alī al-Najjār (Beirut, 1955) II: 401; Ibn Wahb uses the word *bayyināt* instead of *aymān* together with the *shuhūd*. Ibn Wahb, I: 9.

[262] Ibn Qutaybah, *Tafsīr gharīb al-Qur'ān*, 378.

[263] Al-Ṭabarī, XXIII: 140. See also al-Samarqandī, III: 132; Ibn al-Jawzī, III: 564. Al-Baghawī attributes this definition to 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib. Al-Baghawī, IV: 52.

[264] Ibn al-Jawzī, III: 564.

[265] Muqātil, *Tafsīr* III: 639; 'Abd al-Razzāq, III: 113.

[266] Al-Farrā', II: 401; Ibn Qutaybah, *Tafsīr gharīb al-Qur'ān*, 378; Ibn al-Jawzī, III: 564.

[267] Al-Baghawī, IV: 52.

[268] Ibn al-Jawzī, III: 564; al-Baghawī, IV: 52.

refers to an unimpeachable argument which forces itself ineluctably upon the interlocutor.[269]

Another Qur'anic personality whose name is usually, if not always, accompanied by the word *ḥikmah* is Luqmān. His extraordinary wisdom, sagacity, and comprehension of subtle meanings make Luqmān an unparalleled figure in Muslim literature. In general, he is not regarded as a Prophet, but instead as an upright pious individual. The following section will deal with Luqmān in detail.

V. *Ḥikmah* and thankfulness: the case of Luqmān

In 31:12, the word *ḥikmah* is mentioned in relation to Luqmān the *Ḥakīm*, after whom this *sūrah* is named. The early verses of the *sūrah* state that these verses/signs are of the *Ḥakīm* Book, which is a guidance and mercy to those who do good, who perform prayer, pay alms, and have sure faith in the Hereafter (31:2-5). There are some men who buy diverting talk to lead people astray from the way of God without knowledge, and to take it in mockery.[270] When the verses/signs of God are recited to such a man, he turns away arrogantly, as if he had not heard them and as if he had a hearing difficulty (31:6-7). Starting from 12, the verses speak about Luqmān and his wise sayings as follows, "Indeed, We gave Luqmān *ḥikmah* [saying]: 'Give thanks to God. Whoever gives thanks gives thanks only for his own soul's good, and whoever is ungrateful, surely God is All-

[269] Al-Ṭabarī, XXIII: 140. Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765), on the other hand, is reported as giving a combined definition of *ḥikmah* and *faṣl al-khiṭāb* as truthfulness in speech (*ṣidq al-qawl*), soundness/reliability in contract (*ṣiḥḥat al-'aqd*), and stability in affairs (*thabāt fī al-umūr*). Paul Nwyia "Le tafsīr mystique attribué à Ja'far Ṣādiq," *Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph* 43.4 (1968): 218.

[270] As the occasion of revelation of this verse, *tafsīr* scholars mention Naḍr b. al-Ḥārith's attitude against the Qur'an. Naḍr was a pagan who lived at the time of the Prophet. He would buy books on Persian romance and read them to uneducated people to divert their attention from the Qur'an. He would tell them that Muḥammad was telling them stories about the people of 'Ād and Thamūd and he was going to talk to them about stories related to Iranians and Romans. See al-Dīnawarī, II: 158; Ibn al-Jawzī, III: 430.

sufficient, All-praiseworthy.'" Luqmān admonishes his son gently concerning a number of essential principles saying that: 1) he should not associate others with God, since this is a mighty injustice (*ẓulm 'aẓīm*);[271] 2) he should never forget that everything (good and evil) is known to God and that He will take account of it, as He is All-subtle, All-aware; 3) he should perform the prayer, enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong, and bear patiently whatever may befall him; and, 4) he should not behave arrogantly and exultantly, since God does not love any prideful boaster; rather he should behave with humility (31:14-19).

Very little is known of Luqmān's life. According to the commentators, he belongs to Arab tradition as he was a member and sage of the people of 'Ād. He is treated as a model of perfect wisdom. *Tafsīr* authorities report that he was an Ethiopian slave carpenter. There are a number of accounts reflecting his wiseness. For example, once his master (*sayyid*) ordered him to slaughter a lamb for him. Luqmān did what he was told. The master instructed him to remove the two best pieces from the lamb and bring them to him. Luqmān brought the tongue and the heart. Sometime later his master ordered him again to slaughter a lamb for him, but this time to take out and bring the worst two pieces of it to him. Luqmān brought the tongue and the heart again. When his master asked him regarding this matter saying, "I had ordered you to bring the best two pieces and you had brought the tongue and heart to me. Then I ordered you to bring the worst two pieces and you have brought the tongue and heart?", Luqmān replied, "the reason was that if these two things are good there is not any better thing, neither is there

[271] Ibn Qutaybah defines the word *ẓulm*, which is one of the opposite concepts to *ḥikmah*, as "putting a thing in a place which is not its authentic place (*waḍ' al-shay' fī ghayr mawḍi'ih*)." Ibn Qutaybah, *Tafsīr gharīb al-Qur'ān*, 28.

any worse thing if these two are bad."[272] Al-Suyūṭī refers to the following hadith regarding Luqmān's characteristics reported by al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, "Luqmān was a slave of much thinking (*kathīr al-tafakkur*), good opinion (*ḥusn al-ẓann*), much silence (*kathīr al-ṣamṭ*). He loved God and God loved him; and God bestowed *ḥikmah* upon him..."[273]

According to another anecdote indicating Luqmān's wisdom, a certain man came to Luqmān as the latter was talking to a group of people and asked him about how it was that he attained such perfection. Luqmān replied, "correctness in speech (*ṣidq al-ḥadīth*) and being silent regarding things that do not concern me (*al-ṣamt 'an-mā lā ya'nīnī*)."[274] In his narration of the same story, al-Samarqandī adds another quality to these two characteristics as Luqmān mentioned "fulfilling the trust (*adā' al-amānah*)" as well.[275]

Al-Suyūṭī mentions accounts in which Luqmān gives advice to his son saying, "O my son, you should sit with the *'ulamā'* and listen to the words of the *ḥukamā'*, for God gives new life to a dead heart through the light of *ḥikmah*, just as downpour gives new life to a dead land;"[276] "O my son, do not learn that which you do not know until you practice that which you do know (*lā tata'allam mā lā ta'lam ḥattā ta'mal bi-mā*

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[272] Yahyā b. Sallām, *Tafsīr Yahyā b. Sallām*, ed. Hind Shalabī (Beirut, 2004) II: 672-673; al-Ṭabarī, XXI: 67-68; al-Samarqandī, III: 20-21; al-Māwardī, IV: 331-332.

[273] Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manthūr* VI: 510-511.

[274] Al-Ṭabarī, XXI: 68.

[275] Al-Samarqandī, III: 21.

[276] Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manthūr* VI: 512. As have previously pointed out, al-Suyūṭī cites the same hadith when he explicates verse 2:269.

ta'lam);"[277] and "There is no wealth (*ghinā*) like health and there is no comfort/happiness (*na'īm*) like high spiritedness (*tayyib al-nafs*)."[278] Al-Suyūṭī also cites the following saying, which is frequently quoted by lexicographers as I have mentioned in the previous chapter, as one of Luqmān's aphorisms, "Silence is [a part] of *ḥikmah*, but only a few practice it."[279]

With the exception of 'Ikrimah, the majority of the early authorities, including Mujāhid and Qatādah, argue that Luqmān was not a prophet, but a wise (*ḥakīm*) and upright (*ṣāliḥ*) person instead.[280] 'Ikrimah (d.107/725), on the other hand, asserts that Luqmān was a prophet at the same time.[281] Commentators relate that Luqmān was given a heavenly option to choose between prophethood and *ḥikmah*. He chose *ḥikmah* over prophethood. When he was asked about the reason for the choice, he said that he was afraid of not being able to carry out the mission of prophethood properly and thus *ḥikmah* was more appealing to him.[282]

As far as the meaning of the word *ḥikmah* in this verse is concerned, scholars list various definitions. Mujāhid interprets this *ḥikmah* as comprehension (*fiqh*), intellect

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[277] Ibid., VI: 519.

[278] Ibid., VI: 515.

[279] Ibid., VI: 513. In another context, Suyūṭī reports some accounts in which we find the expressions "it is written in *ḥikmah* (*maktūb fī al-ḥikmah*), i.e., the *ḥikmah* of Luqmān (*ya'nī ḥikmat Luqmān*)", "I have found (*wajadtu*) in *ḥikmah*," and "I have read (*qara'tu*) in *ḥikmah*". Ibid., VI: 517-518. But as he does not explain the meaning of *ḥikmah* in this context, one cannot be sure if he is referring to some written materials preserved as Luqmān's sayings or to something else.

[280] Al-Ṭabarī, XXI: 67; Ibn Abī Ḥātim, IX: 3097; al-Samarqandī, III: 20; Ibn al-Jawzī, III: 430; al-Baghawī, III: 490-491.

[281] Ibn Abī Ḥātim, IX: 3098; al-Samarqandī, III: 20; Ibn al-Jawzī, III: 430; al-Baghawī, III: 490-491.

[282] Ibn Abī Ḥātim, IX: 3097.

(*'aql*), and correctness in speech in cases other than in prophethood.[283] In this context, al-Samarqandī cites a hadith describing *ḥikmah* as a gift from God to His ascetic servants. God places *ḥikmah* in the hearts of such pious people whose speeches and acts go along with this special heavenly gift. The Prophet encourages Muslims to keep the company of such people and to listen to them, since they have been given *ḥikmah*.[284] Mujāhid defines *ḥikmah* as trust (*amānah*) and as the Qur'an as well.[285] Another definition of *ḥikmah* is prophethood as argued by al-Suddī.[286]

Tafsīr scholars assert that the second part of this verse (Give thanks to God) indicates that being given *ḥikmah* requires thankfulness to God in return. In reality, however, this thankfulness is for the servant's own good.[287]

Given all these explanations of the word *ḥikmah* in this verse, once again, I cannot concur with Gutas' argument that *ḥikmah* here refers to "a book of maxims" that God gave to Luqmān.[288] Maxims might form a part of *ḥikmah*, but *ḥikmah* goes far beyond

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[283] Mujāhid b. Jabr, 541; 'Abd al-Razzāq, III: 22; Yaḥyā b. Sallām, *Tafsīr* II: 672; al-Ṭabarī, XXI: 67; Ibn Abī Ḥātim, IX: 3097; al-Samarqandī, III: 20; al-Māwardī, IV: 332. Similarly, Zayd b. 'Alī says that the meaning of *ḥikmah* is comprehension and correctness in speech. Zayd b. 'Alī, 250. Muqātil and Ibn Wahb define *ḥikmah* as knowledge (*'ilm*) and understanding (*fahm*) in cases other than in prophethood. Muqātil, *Tafsīr* III: 434; al-Dinawarī, II: 159. Yaḥyā b. Sallām reports that this *ḥikmah* denotes also understanding and intellect. Yaḥyā b. Sallām, *Tafsīr* II: 672. On the authority of Mujāhid's teacher, Ibn 'Abbās, al-Suyūṭī narrates that Ibn 'Abbās defined *ḥikmah* in this place as intellect, understanding, and perspicacity (*fiṭnah*) in everything other than prophethood. Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manthūr* VI: 510. Qatādah asserts that *ḥikmah* means comprehension in Islam. Al-Ṭabarī, XXI: 67. Al-Baghawī says that the meaning of *ḥikmah* here covers intellect, knowledge and practice, and correctness in matters. Al-Baghawī, III: 490.

[284] Al-Samarqandī, III: 20.

[285] Al-Ṭabarī, XXI: 68. Even though al-Ṭabarī relates Mujāhid's interpretation of *ḥikmah* in this verse as such, Mujāhid should be defining this word in a general manner. Otherwise, historically speaking, there is no point to apply this definition to Luqmān.

[286] Al-Samarqandī, III: 20; Ibn al-Jawzī, III: 430.

[287] Muqātil, *Tafsīr* III: 434; al-Ṭabarī, XXI: 68; al-Samarqandī, III: 21.

[288] Gutas, "Classical Arabic Wisdom Literature," 54.

this meaning and indicates an essential practical dimension, since Luqmān's behavior and morality, as well as his words, were in agreement with the *ḥikmah* given to him. Reducing the meaning of *ḥikmah* to merely "maxim", therefore, excludes indispensable components of this concept. This fact can also be seen in the Qur'anic attribution of *ḥikmah* to Jesus, which is also, one might say, arbitrarily, defined by Gutas as "maxim".[289]

VI. *Ḥikmah* as a touchstone or criterion to clarify misconceptions: the case of Jesus

In 3:48 the word *ḥikmah* occurs in a context related to Jesus and his heavenly characteristics. God chose Adam, Noah, the family of Abraham, the family of Imran, and their descendents over the worlds (3:33-34). The wife of Imran [Hannah] dedicated his unborn child to the service of God and when she delivered the baby she named her Mary and prayed that God would protect Mary and her offspring from the accursed Satan (3:35-36). God accepted the child with gracious favor and assigned Zachariah to care for her as she grew up in purity and beauty (3:37). Zachariah also desired to have a child and prayed that God would give him a goodly offspring. When the angels informed him that God would give him good tidings of John who would confirm a Word from God as well as be noble, chaste, a Prophet, and a righteous person, Zachariah was very surprised, because he was an old man and his wife was barren. The angels responded that such was God's will (3:38-40). The angels came and told Mary that she was chosen above all women and purified by God; she should be obedient to her Lord and worship Him (3:42-43). The following verse expresses that this was all from the news of the unseen to which

[289] Gutas, "Classical Arabic Wisdom Literature," 54.

Muḥammad had no physical access (3:44). The Qur'an then goes into the story of Jesus' birth. The angels said to Mary that God was sending her good tidings of a Word from Him whose name would be the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary and that he would be high honored in this world and the next, and that he would be among those who were stationed near to God. He would also speak to the people in childhood and in maturity, and he would be of the righteous. Mary felt shocked with this message and asked how she could have a son seeing that no man had touched her. She received the following response (3:45-51),

> Even so, God creates what He wills. When He decrees a thing He does but say to it "Be," and it is. And He will teach him the *kitāb*, the *ḥikmah*, the Torah, and the Gospel, to be a Messenger to the Children of Israel saying, "I have come to you with a sign form your Lord. I will create for you out of clay as the likeness of a bird; then I will breathe into it, and it will be a bird by the permission of God. I will also heal the blind (from birth) and the leper, and bring to life the dead, by the permission of God. And I will inform you of what things you eat, and what you treasure up in your houses. Surely, in that is a sign for you, if you are believers. And [I have also come to you] to be a confirmer of the truth of the Torah that came before me, and to make lawful to you some of the things that were forbidden to you previously. I have come to you with a sign from your Lord; so fear God and obey me. Indeed, God is my Lord and your Lord; so serve/worship Him. This is a straight path."

Scholars of *tafsīr* do not seem to put any special emphasis on this verse. The majority of early commentators simply explain the words *kitāb* and *ḥikmah* as handwriting (*kitābah/khaṭṭ*)[290] and the *sunnah*,[291] respectively. Some authorities argue that the *kitāb* refers to the Books of the Prophets (*kutub al-anbiyā'*),[292] their *ḥikmah*,[293]

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[290] 'Abd al-Malik b. 'Abd al-'Azīz b. Jurayj, *Tafsīr Ibn Jurayj*, ed. 'Alī Ḥasan 'Abd al-Ghanī (Cairo, 1992): 68. Muqātil, *Tafsīr* I: 171; al-Huwwārī, I: 284; al-Dīnawarī, I: 107; al-Ṭabarī, VI: 421-422; al-Samarqandī, I: 268; Ibn Abī Zamanayn, I: 289; Ibn al-Jawzī, I: 284; al-Sam'ānī, I: 320; al-Baghawī, I: 302; Ibn 'Aṭiyyah, II: 426-427.

[291] Ibn Jurayj, 68; Muqātil, *Tafsīr* I: 171; al-Huwwārī, l: 284; al-Ṭabarī, VI: 421-422; Ibn Abī Zamanayn, I: 289; Ibn 'Aṭiyyah, II: 426-427.

[292] Al-Dīnawarī, I: 107; al-Samarqandī, I: 268.

[293] Al-Dinawarī, I: 107.

and knowledge.[294] As for *ḥikmah*, they introduce a number of secondary meanings such as (the knowledge of) what is lawful (*ḥalāl*) and unlawful (*ḥarām*),[295] understanding, knowledge, comprehension,[296] judgment by Prophets,[297] and correctness in speech and act.[298] The Qur'anic attribution of *ḥikmah* to Jesus can also be analyzed in the following verse.

In 5:110, the context seems to be very much related to verses 3:48 and 3:81. The previous verse describes a scene (apparently in the future) in which God will gather the Messengers and ask, "What was the response you received?" They will say that they have no knowledge of this, as God is the Knower of things unseen. Then God will say (5:110),

> O Jesus, Son of Mary, remember My blessing upon you and upon your mother when I confirmed you with the Holy Spirit to speak to men in childhood and in maturity; and when I taught you the *kitāb*, *ḥikmah*, the Torah, and the Gospel; and when you created, with My permission, out of clay the likeness of a bird, then you breathed into it, and it became a bird with My permission; and when you healed the blind and the leper with My permission; and you when brought the dead forth with My permission; and when I restrained the Children of Israel from you when you came to them with the clear signs, and the unbelievers among them said, "This is nothing but obvious magic."

Then the Qur'an depicts a conversation between God and Jesus (5:116-119),

> And when God said, "O Jesus, Son of Mary, did you say to the people, "Take me and my mother as gods, apart from God?" He will say, "Glory be to You! It is not for me to say what I have no right to. If I had said it, You would indeed have known it. You know what is within myself, and I know not what is within Yourself; You know the things unseen. I only said to them what You commanded me: 'Worship God, my Lord and Your Lord.' And I was a witness over them as long as I remained among them. But when You took me up, You were the Watcher over them; You are a Witness of everything. If You punish them, they are Your servants and if You forgive them,

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[294] Ibn al-Jawzī, I: 284.

[295] Muqātil, *Tafsīr* I: 171; al-Dinawarī, I: 107.

[296] Al-Dinawarī, I: 107; al-Samarqandī, I: 268; Ibn al-Jawzī, I: 284; al-Sam'ānī, I: 320; al-Baghawī, I: 302.

[296] Ibn Jurayj, 68.

[297] Ibn al-Jawzī, I: 284.

[298] Ibn 'Aṭiyyah, II: 426-427.

You are the All-mighty, the All-wise." God will say, "This is the day the truthful will benefit from their truthfulness."

Most of the early authorities on *tafsīr* argue that the word *kitāb* in this verse means handwriting.[299] They also state that it means the *kutub* (books); its singular form (*kitāb*) is used here as a generic noun[300] referring to the books of the prophets.[301]

As for the word *ḥikmah*, authorities assert that it means knowledge, understanding, comprehension,[302] and the knowledge of what is lawful and what is unlawful.[303] Al-Ṭabarī further elucidates this definition by arguing that *ḥikmah* here indicates understanding the meanings of the Book that God revealed to Jesus, which is the Gospel.[304] Al-Māwardī, on the other hand, expands the range of meaning to cover also the knowledge of that which exists in the previous books as well. He also mentions as a second interpretation for *ḥikmah* that it indicates everything Jesus needed regarding his religion as well as his this-worldly affairs.[305]

In 43:63 the word *ḥikmah* is similarly mentioned in relation to Jesus. According to the Qur'anic statements, when the son of Mary was cited as an example, the unbelievers attempted to make fun of this and to compare Jesus and their own gods. But they were not sincerely looking for the truth of the matter; rather, they were only trying to

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[299] Muqātil, *Tafsīr* I: 351; Ibn Qutaybah, *Tafsīr gharīb al-Qur'ān*, 148; al-Dīnawarī, I: 215; al-Ṭabarī, XI: 215; al-Samarqandī, I: 466; al-Māwardī, II: 79; al-Baghawī, II: 77.

[300] Al-Māwardī, II: 79-80.

[301] Al-Dīnawarī, I: 215.

[302] Muqātil, *Tafsīr* I: 351; Ibn Qutaybah, *Tafsīr gharīb al-Qur'ān*, 148; al-Ṭabarī, XI: 215; al-Samarqandī, I: 466; al-Māwardī, II: 79; al-Baghawī, II: 77.

[303] Al-Dinawarī, I: 215.

[304] Al-Ṭabarī, XI: 215.

[305] Al-Māwardī, II: 79-80.

engage in meaningless disputations (43:57-58).[306] The Qur'an introduces its own description of Jesus noting that he was a blessed servant and that God made him an example to the Children of Israel (43:59). Then the verses 63-64 read,

> And when Jesus came with the clear signs (*bayyināt*), he said, "I have come to you with *ḥikmah*, and that I may make clear to you some of that over which you differ; so fear God and obey me. Indeed, God is my Lord and your Lord; therefore worship Him; this is a straight path."

Early commentators do not seem to give special attention to the word *ḥikmah* in this verse either. They give mainly two references of the word, namely, prophethood[307] and the Gospel (*Injīl*)[308] that was revealed to Jesus, in which there are explanations regarding what is lawful and unlawful.[309] Al-Māwardī mentions another possible meaning of *ḥikmah* here as knowledge that leads to good and prevents from evil.[310]

As for the word *bayyināt*, some scholars assert that it refers to clear proofs,[311] including miracles such as giving life to the dead, and curing the blind and the leper.[312] Other scholars state that it refers to the Gospel.[313]

In the case of Jesus, therefore, the Qur'an states that he was extremely blessed by *ḥikmah*, in addition to his other heavenly characteristics. God taught him the *kitāb*, the

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[306] *Tafsīr* scholars report that those unbelievers knew something about the theological position of Jesus in Christian belief at that time. By way of making a comparison between their own gods and Jesus as held by those Christians, the unbelievers were attempting to go into contentious speculations with the Muslims. Ibn al-Jawzī, IV: 81; al-Baghawī, IV: 142-143.

[307] Al-Dīnawarī, II: 291; al-Ṭabarī, XXV: 92; al-Samarqandī, III: 212; Ibn al-Jawzī, IV: 82; al-Māwardī, V: 236; al-Baghawī, IV: 144.

[308] Muqātil, *Tafsīr* III: 800; Ibn al-Jawzī, IV: 82; al-Māwardī, V: 236; al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf* II: 495.

[309] Muqātil, *Tafsīr* III: 800; al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf* II: 495.

[310] Al-Māwardī, V: 236.

[311] Al-Ṭabarī, XXV: 92.

[312] Al-Samarqandī, III: 212.

[313] Al-Ṭabarī, XXV: 92; al-Samarqandī, III: 212.

ḥikmah, the Torah, and the Gospel; and accordingly, Jesus came to his people with the clear signs and *ḥikmah* to clarify them the points on which they had disagreement. Once again, it does not seem to be easy to define the *ḥikmah* in these verses with a single word. Rather, together with other qualities peculiar to him, *ḥikmah* seems to refer basically to Jesus' exclusive position in the Qur'an.

Having listed all these Qur'anic instances in which the word *ḥikmah* is mentioned in relation to the earlier Prophets, it is now time to examine the application of this notion to the Prophet of Islam.

VII. *Hikmah* as Heavenly grace to the unlettered people: the case of Muḥammad

In 2:151 the words *kitāb* and *ḥikmah* occur in a context related to the idea of *qiblah* (the direction faced in prayer). In the early days of Islam, the Muslims used to turn towards Jerusalem as their *qiblah*, and apparently the Prophet was willing to change this practice (2:144), for the Jews of Medina took this as the Prophet simply imitating their religion. On the Muslims' part, however, turning to Jerusalem symbolized their allegiance to the continuity of heavenly revelation. When the Prophet's desire was answered by God, the Ka'bah became the *qiblah* for Muslims. On this occasion, the Jews started talking sarcastically about this change, since they saw in it inconsistent behavior. The Qur'an challenges their attitude on the general grounds that the whole world, East and West, belongs in reality to God and He is the one Who guides to the straight path (2:142). Those who were given the Book were aware of the fact that this new message and Messenger were sent by God, but still, some of them did not accept and appreciate it. Muslims are encouraged to strive as in a race towards good works, rather than embarking

upon endless disputations with those who were given the Book before them (2:145-149). Wherever they may be, Muslims should turn their faces towards the Holy Mosque and should not fear the evildoers. Rather, the Muslims should fear God so that He may perfect His blessing upon them and that they may be guided (2:150). The following two verses read,

> Just as We have sent among you, from yourselves, a Messenger to recite to you Our signs, to purify you, to teach you the *kitāb* and *ḥikmah*, and to teach you that which you did not know, so remember Me, and I shall remember you; and be thankful to Me; and do not be ungrateful to me.

These verses indicate that having being taught the *kitāb* and *ḥikmah* is something that requires thankfulness and gratitude in return, as noted above in the case of Luqmān.

The majority of the early *mufassirūn* interpret *kitāb* in this verse as the Qur'an.[314] Alongside this, al-Māwardī offers an explanation to the effect that this word means informing (*ikhbār*) about that which existed in the previous books regarding the past centuries.[315] As far as the word *ḥikmah* is concerned, the commentators list various meanings, such as the *sunnah*[316] and the admonitions of the Qur'an,[317] and [the knowledge of] what is lawful and what is unlawful.[318] Al-Ṭabarī asserts that *ḥikmah* here means the prophetic practices (*sunan*) and comprehension in religion.[319]

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[314] Muqātil, *Tafsīr* I: 77; al-Huwwārī, I: 158; al-Dīnawarī, II: 52; al-Ṭabarī, III: 211; Ibn Abī Zamanayn, I: 188; Ibn al-Jawzī, I: 123; al-Māwardī, I: 208.

[315] Al-Māwardī, I: 208.

[316] Al-Huwwārī, I: 158; Ibn Abī Zamanayn, I: 188; Ibn al-Jawzī, I: 123; al-Māwardī, I: 208; al-Sam'ānī, I: 155; al-Baghawī, I: 128.

[317] Al-Māwardī, I: 208; al-Sam'ānī, I: 155; al-Baghawī, I: 128.

[318] Muqātil, *Tafsīr* I: 77; al-Dīnawarī, II: 52.

[319] Al-Ṭabarī, III: 211.

In 4:113 the words *kitāb* and *ḥikmah* are mentioned in an interesting context. *Tafsīr* authorities relate an anecdote about the occasion of the revelation of this verse as follows: A man from the Anṣār called Ṭu'mah, who was a member of the tribe of Banū Ẓafar, was nominally known as a Muslim but was actually a hypocrite who had committed all sorts of wicked acts. He had, for example, stolen a set of armor (*dir'*) from his neighbor named Qatādah b. al-Nu'mān. The armor was in a sack filled with flour, but the sack also had a hole. Ṭu'mah first took the armor to his own house and then intentionally left it in the house of Zayd who was a Jew. When the owner followed his stolen property, it was eventually found in the house of Zayd. Zayd denied the charge and accused Ṭu'mah, but the sympathies of the Muslim community were with Ṭu'mah who also took oaths to prove his innocence. The case was brought to the Prophet. Out of tribal alliance and honor, Banū Ẓafar attempted to prejudice him and deceive him into using his authority in favor of Ṭu'mah. Seeing Ṭu'mah's oath and the testimony of his tribe, the Prophet was about to identify Zayd as the guilty party when, exactly at this moment, he received this revelation.[320] In this context, the Prophet is instructed that he has been given the *kitāb* with the truth so that he might judge between the people with God's guidance; he should not be an advocate for traitors, but seek forgiveness of God, Who is All-forgiving, All-compassionate (4:105-106). Even if he and others should dispute on their behalf in the present life, on the Resurrection Day those traitors will have no one to help them. In reality, whoever commits a sin, commits it against himself only,

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[320] Mujāhid b. Jabr, 291-292; al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, I: 296-297; al-Ḍaḥḥāk, I: 303-304; al-Dīnawarī, I: 168; al-Ṭabarī, IX: 196-199; al-Samarqandī, I: 384-386; Ibn al-Jawzī, I: 465-466; al-Sam'ānī, I: 475-476; al-Baghawī, I: 477.

[320] Al-Zajjāj, II: 113.

for God is All-knowing, All-wise. And whoever commits a sin and then blames it upon the innocent, has thereby laid upon himself a slander and manifest sin (4:109-112). The following verse says,

> And if it were not for the grace of God to you, and His mercy, a group of them would have purposed to lead you astray; but they lead only themselves astray; they cannot hurt you in anything. God has sent down to you the *kitāb* and *ḥikmah*, and He has taught you that which you did not know; God's grace to you is ever great.

The majority of the early commentators state that the word *kitāb* in this verse refers to the Qur'an[321] in which there is an explanation of everything, guidance, and admonition.[322] As for *ḥikmah*, they introduce various interpretations. Al-Ṭabarī asserts that in this verse, *kitāb* is accompanied by *ḥikmah*, which denotes everything that exists in the *kitāb* in a general manner (*mujmalan*) in its statements indicating lawful and unlawful things, commands and prohibitions, judgments, and promises and threats.[323] Ibn al-Jawzī gives three definitions of *ḥikmah* as follows: 1) it means judgments through the revelation, as Ibn 'Abbās said; 2) it refers to [the knowledge of] what is lawful and what is unlawful, as Muqātil argued; and, 3) it denotes an explanation of that which exists in the *kitāb*, inspiring truth or correct(ness), and delivering the correct answer in a confusing situation (*raw'*), as stated by Abū Sulaymān al-Dimashqī.[324] Al-Sam'ānī defines *ḥikmah* in this verse as *sunnah*.[325] Al-Zajjāj, on the other hand, argues that this

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[321] Al-Ṭabarī, IX: 200; al-Samarqandī, I: 387; Ibn al-Jawzī, I: 470; al-Sam'ānī, I: 477; al-Baghawī, I: 479.

[322] Al-Ṭabarī, IX: 200.

[323] Ibid., IX: 200.

[324] Ibn al-Jawzī, I: 470. For similar treatments, see al-Dīnawarī, I: 171; al-Samarqandī, I: 387; al-Baghawī, I: 479.

[325] Al-Sam'ānī, I: 477.

passage means that in His *kitāb*, God has explained the *ḥikmah* which does not allow one to go astray (*ḍalāl*).[326]

In 17:39 the word *ḥikmah* occurs within a framework that covers a number of essential Qur'anic principles. According to the Qur'anic statements, God commands that He alone be worshipped and that parents be treated with extreme respect and with utmost care in every sense. Relatives, the needy, and travelers should be given their rights. One should not spend wastefully nor tightfistedly, but should rather do one's honest best to help the poor, even if that be with as little as gentle words. Children should not be slain for fear of poverty, which is a grievous sin. One should not approach fornication, since it is an indecent and evil thing to do. No one is to be killed unjustly. Until he reaches maturity, the property of an orphan should not be touched save in the fairest manner. One should fulfill one's covenants and give full measure when measuring. One should not pursue that of which one has no knowledge: the hearing, the sight, and the heart – regarding all of these one will be questioned. One is not to walk on the earth exultantly. All the aforementioned are wicked and hateful things in the sight of the Lord (17:23-38). In this context, the following verse says, "That is (or these are) of the *ḥikmah* your Lord has revealed to you, so set not up with God another god, lest you be thrown into Hell, reproached and rejected."

Early authorities on *tafsīr* do not seem to pay specific attention to the word *ḥikmah* in this verse. Muqātil asserts that the first part of the verse refers to all the abovementioned commands and prohibitions in those verses and that *ḥikmah* means that

[326] Al-Zajjāj, II: 113.

which God has revealed to the Prophet.[327] Al-Ṭabarī states that he has explained *ḥikmah* in the previous Qur'anic instances and that there is no need to repeat them for this verse. He simply states that the word *dhālika* at the beginning of the verse points to everything explained in the previous verses regarding praiseworthy and wicked moral characteristics commanded and prohibited by God. The part, "of the *ḥikmah* (*min al-ḥikmah*) your Lord has revealed to you" means "of the *ḥikmah* that God has revealed to the Prophet in the Qur'an."[328] Al-Samarqandī, on the other hand, argues that *min al-ḥikmah* denotes explanation of what is lawful and unlawful.[329]

In 54:5 the word *ḥikmah* appears in a very subtle manner. As the occasion of the revelation of this section, scholars report that a group of unbelievers came to the Prophet and challenged him to show them a miracle proving his prophethood, if he was truly a prophet. At this request, with the permission of God, the Prophet pointed to the moon and it split in two. Those unbelievers, however, called that miracle mere magic.[330] The *sūrah* begins in a bewildering manner. It says that the Hour has drawn nigh and the moon has split. Yet if they (unbelievers) see a sign they turn away, and they say that it is continuous sorcery (*siḥr mustamirr*). They have denied and followed their caprices; but every matter is settled (54:1-3). The following verses read, "And there have come to them such tidings as contain a deterrent; a *ḥikmah* far-reaching, yet warnings do not avail; so turn away from them..." (54:4-6). The rest of the *sūrah* relates examples from the previous generations to whom Messengers of God had come, but who denied the

[327] Muqātil, *Tafsīr* II: 531.

[328] Al-Ṭabarī, XV: 90; Ibn al-Jawzī, III: 25.

[329] Al-Samarqandī, II: 269.

[330] Muqātil, *Tafsīr* IV: 177; al-Ṭabarī, XXVII: 89; Ibn al-Jawzī, IV: 196; al-Baghawī, IV: 258.

heavenly messages and gave the Prophets a hard time. In the end, however, those deniers experienced severe punishments.

The majority of the early *tafsīr* authorities define the expression *ḥikmah bālighah* as the Qur'an.[331] Al-Baghawī asserts that *ḥikmah bālighah* refers to the Qur'an because the Qur'an is a complete *ḥikmah* that has reached the utmost degree regarding warning.[332] On the authority of al-Suddī, al-Māwardī states that *ḥikmah bālighah* means the prophetic message (*risālah*) and the *kitāb*. He also mentions another possible meaning of this phrase as promising and threatening (*wa'd wa-wa'īd*).[333] Al-Naysābūrī, on the other hand, argues that *ḥikmah bālighah* denotes ultimate correctness (*nihāyat al-ṣawāb*).[334]

Verse 3:164 describes the significance and function of a prophet for a society that was previously unaware of this heavenly good fortune. The verse says, "Truly God was gracious to the believers when He raised up among them a Messenger from themselves, reciting to them His signs and purifying them and teaching them the *kitāb* and *ḥikmah*, though before they were in manifest error."

Many of the early commentators argue that the *kitāb* and *ḥikmah* in this verse denote the Qur'an[335] and *sunnah*, respectively.[336] Muqātil further elucidates his

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[331] Muqātil, *Tafsīr* IV: 177; al-Huwwārī, IV: 251; al-Dīnawarī, II: 359; al-Ṭabarī, XXVII: 89; al-Samarqandī, III: 298; al-Baghawī, IV: 259.

[332] Al-Baghawī, IV: 259.

[333] Al-Māwardī, V: 410-411.

[334] Al-Naysābūrī, II: 222.

[335] Muqātil, *Tafsīr* I: 202; al-Shāfi'ī, *Tafsīr al-Imām al-Shāfi'ī*, ed. Majdī b. Manṣūr b. Sayyid al-Shūrī (Beirut, 1995): 61; al-Huwwārī, I: 330; al-Ṭabarī, VII: 369-370; al-Samarqandī, I: 313; Ibn Abī Zamanayn, I: 332; al-Sam'ānī, , I: 376; al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf* I: 477.

[336] Muqātil, *Tafsīr* I: 202; al-Shāfi'ī, *Tafsīr*, 61; al-Huwwārī, I: 330; al-Ṭabarī, VII: 369-370; Ibn Abī Zamanayn, I: 332; al-Sam'ānī, I: 376; al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf* I: 477.

definition by asserting that *ḥikmah* refers to the admonitions in the Qur'an regarding what is lawful and unlawful.[337] Similarly, al-Samarqandī argues that it means comprehension and explanation of what is lawful and unlawful.[338] Al-Sam'ānī cites Ibn 'Abbās' definition of *ḥikmah* as comprehension and religious laws (*sharā'i'*).[339] Al-Shāfi'ī (d. 204/819), on the other hand, states that God mentions *ḥikmah* right after the *kitāb* and that this fact indicates the significance of the authority of the Prophet in religious matters.[340] Similarly, al-Ṭabarī says that *ḥikmah* means the *sunnah* that God prescribed (*sanna*) for the believers on the tongue (*lisān*) of the Prophet and his explanation to them.[341]

In 62:2 the word *ḥikmah* appears in a context similar to that of 2:151 and 3:164. The *sūrah* begins with a statement that all that is in the heavens and the earth magnifies God, the Sovereign, the All-holy, the All-mighty, the All-wise. The following verse (62:3) says,

> It is He who has sent among the unlettered people a Messenger from among themselves, to recite His signs to them and to purify them, and to teach them the *kitāb* and *ḥikmah*, though before that they were in manifest error and others of them who have not yet joined them. And He is the All-mighty, All-wise.

This is a result of God's bounty, which He gives to whom He wills (62:4). Then the verses criticize the attitudes of the Jews toward this new heavenly message. This section of the *sūrah* seems to imply that the Jews were making a big mistake by looking down on the Arabs on account of the fact that they had not received any heavenly message before.

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[337] Muqātil, *Tafsīr* I: 202.

[338] Al-Samarqandī, I: 281.

[339] Al-Sam'ānī, I: 376.

[340] Al-Shāfi'ī, *Tafsīr*, 61-62.

[341] Al-Ṭabarī, VII: 369.

For that reason, the Jews called the Arabs unlettered (*ummī*). The Qur'an says that this attitude is in a way attempting to monopolize God's bounty, which is free of all such restrictive racial or national considerations.

The majority of early authorities on *tafsīr* interpret the word *kitāb* in this verse as the Qur'an.[342] Some scholars report that it also means knowledge of good and evil.[343] As far as the word *ḥikmah* here is concerned, commentators list a number of definitions including 1) *sunnah*,[344] 2) admonitions of the Qur'an,[345] 3) [knowledge of] what is lawful and what is unlawful,[346] 4) comprehension in the religion,[347] and 5) understanding and taking admonishment (*itti'āẓ*).[348]

In 2:231 the Qur'an deals with divorce. Divorce is twice;[349] then there should be an honorable retention or a setting free with kindness (2:229). If a man divorces his wife for the third time, then she is not lawful to him after that until she marries another husband. If the latter husband divorces her, there is no blame on the woman and former husband for returning to each other as long as they think that they will maintain God's

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[342] Muqātil, *Tafsīr* IV: 325; al-Huwwārī, IV: 351; al-Dīnawarī, II: 406; Ibn Furāt, II: 483; al-Ṭabarī, XXVIII: 94; al-Samarqandī, III: 362; al-Māwardī, VI: 6.

[343] Al-Māwardī, VI: 6.

[344] Al-Huwwārī, IV: 351; al-Ṭabarī, XXVIII: 94; al-Māwardī, VI: 7.

[345] Muqātil, *Tafsīr* IV: 325; al-Dīnawarī, II: 406.

[346] Muqātil, *Tafsīr* IV: 325; al-Dīnawarī, II: 406; al-Samarqandī, III: 362.

[347] Al-Māwardī, VI: 7.

[348] Al-Māwardī, VI: 7. Ibn Furāt, on the other hand, argues that the word *ḥikmah* in this verse refers to the sanctity (*walāyah*) of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib. Ibn Furāt, II: 483.

[349] Two divorces with a reconciliation between the husband and wife are allowed.

bounds (2:230). But if the final divorce is unavoidable, then it should be on good terms as explained in the following verse (2:231),

> When you divorce women and they have fulfilled their term, then retain them on acceptable terms or set them free on acceptable terms. Do not retain them by force to take undue advantage; whoever does that has indeed wronged himself. Do not take God's signs in jest, and remember God's blessing upon you and the *kitāb* and *ḥikmah*. He has sent [them] down to you to admonish you. And fear God, and know that God has knowledge of everything.

A large number of the early commentators assert that *kitāb* and *ḥikmah* in this verse refer to the Qur'an[350] and *sunnah*,[351] respectively. Being rewarded by these two heavenly gifts necessitates thankfulness and practicing them properly in return.[352] Some authorities interpret *ḥikmah* as the admonitions in the Qur'an regarding God's commands and prohibitions,[353] what is lawful and what is unlawful,[354] and comprehension in the Qur'an.[355] Al-Ṭabarī further elucidates this *ḥikmah*, saying that it means the practices (*sunan*) that the Prophet taught, established, and prescribed for the believers.[356] *Ḥikmah* also denotes the *sunnah* explained by the Prophet regarding the subjects for which the Qur'an does not provide explicit textual statements.[357]

In 33:34 the word *ḥikmah* occurs in a context related to the wives of the Prophet. Scholars of *tafsīr* mention the following incident as the occasion of the revelation of this

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[350] Muqātil, *Tafsīr* I: 120; al-Huwwārī, I: 223; Ibn al-Jawzī, I: 205; al-Sam'ānī, I: 235; al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf* I: 369.

[351] Al-Huwwārī, I: 223; Ibn al-Jawzī, I: 205; al-Sam'ānī, I: 235; al-Baghawī, I: 210; Ibn 'Aṭiyyah, II: 109; al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf* I: 369; al-Qurṭubī, III: 157.

[352] Al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf* I: 369.

[353] Muqātil, *Tafsīr* I: 120; al-Baghawī, I: 210.

[354] Al-Dīnawarī, I: 77.

[355] Al-Samarqandī, I: 209.

[356] Al-Ṭabarī, V: 15.

[357] Ibn 'Aṭiyyah, II: 109; al-Qurṭubī, III: 157.

section (28-34) of the *sūrah*. These verses were revealed in Medina when the social and economical conditions of the Muslims had improved considerably. Apparently, the Prophet's wives demanded to enjoy some part of that widespread wealth, since they had been living on the verge of poverty. This was, however, the result of the Prophet's intentional attitude towards this-worldly things. Upon their insistence on their demands, these verses were revealed. Accordingly, the verse 28 is called the verse of letting them choose (*takhyīr*). The verses remind the wives that they had extra duties and responsibilities in addition to what would generally be expected from ordinary women. When they heard the verses and realized the situation, the wives all choose to remain with the Prophet in modesty over comfort and luxury.[358] The Qur'an instructs the Prophet to tell his wives that if they desire the present life and its adornment, he could provide for them and give them a gracious release. But if they desire God, His Prophet, and the Last Abode, they will surely be rewarded (33:28-29). Then the Qur'an reminds the Prophet's wives of their special position in Muslim community and says (33:34), "And remember that which is recited in your houses of the signs/verses (*āyāt*) of God and *ḥikmah*; God is All-subtle, All-aware."

Early commentators introduce a number of explanations of the word *ḥikmah* in this verse. On the authority of Qatādah many of them report that *ḥikmah* refers to the *sunnah* of the Prophet.[359] Al-Ṭabarī further explains this *sunnah* as that which was revealed to the Prophet regarding religious matters in addition to the Qur'anic

[358] Ibn al-Jawzī, III: 459-460; al-Baghawī, III: 525.

[359] 'Abd al-Razzāq, III: 39; al-Shāfi'ī, *Tafsīr*, 177; al-Tustarī, 43; al-Ṭabarī, XXII: 9; Ibn al-Jawzī, III: 464; al-Māwardī, IV: 401; al-Baghawī, III: 529.

revelation.[360] Similarly, al-Tustarī interprets the words *āyāt* and *ḥikmah* here as the Qur'an and that which was brought by the Prophet deriving from the Qur'anic verses, respectively. He cites the following saying by 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib in this context, "The signs (*āyāt*) are [like] a man to whom God has given understanding (*fahm*) in His book."[361] Some scholars assert that this *ḥikmah* indicates God's commands and prohibitions in the Qur'an.[362]

In addition to the abovementioned verses in which the words *kitāb* and *ḥikmah* together, or just *ḥikmah* alone, occur, there are other verses that include derivatives of the root *ḥ-k-m* which could shade further light on the notion of *ḥikmah* in the Qur'an.

VIII. *Ḥikmah* in relation to *ḥakīm* and *ḥukm*

1. *Ḥakīm*

In the current canonical order of the Qur'an, the first time we see the word *ḥakīm* is in verse 2:32. The verses 2:30-33 describe a scene related to the time when God informed the angels about His decision to create a viceroy (*khalīfah*) on the earth. In response to their questions, God said to the angels that He knows that which they do not know. God taught Adam the names, all of them; then He presented them [i.e., the entities named] to the angels asking them to tell Him their names. The angels responded, "Glory be to You! We do not have any knowledge except what You have taught us. Surely, You are the All-knowing (*al-'alīm*), the All-wise (*al-ḥakīm*)." God instructed Adam to tell the

[360] Al-Ṭabarī, XXII: 9.

[361] Al-Tustarī, 43.

[362] Muqātil, *Tafsīr* III: 489; al-Dīnawarī, II: 177; al-Samarqandī, III: 50; Ibn al-Jawzī, III: 464; al-Māwardī, IV: 401; al-Baghawī, III: 529.

angels their names and when Adam did so, God said, "Did I not tell you that I know the unseen things of the heavens and earth? And I know what you reveal and what you were concealing."

Ibn 'Abbās explains the word *'alīm* and *ḥakīm* in this verse as the one who is perfect/complete in knowledge (*'ilm*) and judgment (*ḥukm*), respectively.[363] Some scholars say that *ḥakīm* means *ḥākim*, just as *'alīm* and *khabīr* mean *'ālim* and *khābir*, respectively.[364] Narrating from previous authorities, al-Māwardī lists three definitions of *ḥakīm* as 1) the one who is perfect/complete in his acts/deeds (*muḥkim fī af'ālih*); 2) the one who prevents/restrains from corruption (*māni' min al-fasād*); and 3) the one who hits upon the correct/right (*muṣīb li-al-ḥaqq*). Al-Māwardī further clarifies these definitions through deriving information from lexicographical literature. He reports, for instance, that the second meaning is testified to by the expression "bit of the bridle (*ḥakamat al-lijām*)", since it (the *ḥakamah*) prevents the horse from walking aggressively (*shadīd*). In this context, al-Māwardī refers to Jarīr's aforementioned line of poetry, "O sons of Ḥanīfah restrain (*aḥkimū*) your foolish ones; I fear for you that I might get angry." Regarding the second definition, al-Māwardī remarks that a *qāḍī* (judge) is called *ḥākim* on account of the fact that he attains rightness in his judgment.[365]

Al-Zamakhsharī, on the other hand, interprets the abovementioned section of the *sūrah* to mean that God knows the real benefits (*maṣāliḥ*) of creating the human being,

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[363] 'Alī b. Abī Ṭalḥah, 82; al-Ṭabarī, I: 496.

[364] Al-Ṭabarī, I: 496.

[365] Al-Māwardī, I: 100-101. For similar expositions, see also al-Sam'ānī, I: 65-66; al-Baghawī, I: 62.

while the matter would not be clear to the angels. Al-Zamakhsharī here raises a hypothetical question:

> If you were to ask why He did not explain those benefits (*maṣāliḥ*) to the angels, I would say that it is enough for the servants to know that all the acts of God are good (*ḥasanah*) and are wisdom (*ḥikmah*), even though the aspect (*wajh*) of the good(ness) and wisdom would be hidden/unknown to them.[366]

It is interesting that al-Zamakhsharī, who in general tries to introduce intelligible arguments, holds such a dogmatic position regarding this matter.

Another Qur'anic case in which we see the word *ḥakīm* is 3:58. The previous verses relate the story of Jesus, his birth, his miracles, his message, his relationship with his supporters and deniers, and his being taken up to God (3:41-57). The Qur'an then says (seemingly addressing the Prophet), "This is what We recite to you of signs and wise remembrance (*al-dhikr al-ḥakīm*)."

The majority of early authorities on *tafsīr* interpret the word *dhikr* in this verse as the Qur'an.[367] Ibn 'Abbās further asserts that the following adjective *ḥakīm* indicates that the Qur'an has attained perfection in its *ḥikmah*.[368] Similarly, al-Ṭabarī states that the *dhikr* here means the Qur'an and that *ḥakīm* denotes the possessor of *ḥikmah* separating the true from the false. In this particular case, it clarifies the diverse opinions and misconceptions regarding Jesus.[369] In the final analysis, these interpretations bring the

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[366] Al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf* I: 271-272. The aforementioned Shiite commentator, al-Sharafī, reports that the word *ḥakīm* in 64:18 means that God is the owner of the perfected *ḥikmah* (*ḥikmah mutqanah*) and of masterly acts in whose arrengment there is no any disharmony to be found. Al-Sharafī, 465.

[367] 'Alī b. Abī Ṭalḥah, 127; Ḍaḥḥāk, I: 248; al-Ṭabarī, VI: 466-467; al-Baghawī, I: 309.

[368] 'Alī b. Abī Ṭalḥah, 127. See also al-Ṭabarī, VI: 465; al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manthūr* II: 37.

[369] Al-Ṭabarī, VI: 466-467. Citing similar interpretations, al-Baghawī refers to Muqātil's definition of this expression as the Qur'an being perfected/completed in a way that there is no possibility for falsehood to penetrate it. Al-Baghawī mentions another meaning of *al-dhikr al-ḥakīm* as indicating *al-lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ* (Preserved Tablet). Al-Baghawī, I: 309.

meaning of *al-dhikr al-ḥakīm* close to the meaning of *ḥikmah bālighah* mentioned in 54: 5.

Two other Qur'anic instances in which the Qur'an describes itself as a *ḥakīm* Book are 31:2 and 36:2. *Tafsīr* scholars assert that *ḥakīm* in these two verses means *muḥkam* (perfected).[370] This perfection is related to its statements regarding [the knowledge of] what is lawful and what is unlawful, judgments (*aḥkām*), and commands and prohibitions.[371] In this context, al-Māwardī cites the following Qur'anic verse describing *ḥakīm* in the sense of perfected (*mutqan*), "falsehood cannot approach it from before it, nor from behind it" (41:42).[372]

In another place, the word *ḥakīm* is used to describe the Essence/Mother of the Book (*umm al-kitāb*). The Qur'an says that God has made the *kitāb* an Arabic Qur'an which is in the Essence (Mother) of the Book in God's presence; exalted (*'aliyy*), *ḥakīm* (43:2-4). Zayd b. 'Alī says that the essence/mother of everything is its origin (*aṣl*). The word *kitāb* refers to the Qur'an and to its essence/mother, which is the copy (*nuskhah*) of it in God's presence (*'inda Allāh*).[373] Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī introduces a similar explanation when he asserts that the Qur'an is in the Essence/Mother of the Book in God's

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[370] Yaḥyā b. Sallām, *Tafsīr* II: 669 and 799; al-Māwardī, IV: 326.

[371] Yaḥyā b. Sallām, *Tafsīr* II: 669.

[372] Al-Māwardī, IV: 326.

[373] Zayd b. 'Alī, 284.

presence.[374] Ibn Wahb interprets the *umm al-kitāb* as the *lawḥ maḥfūẓ* (Preserved Tablet) and says that the Qur'an is written there.[375]

2. *Ḥukm*

In addition to the ten instances in which the word *ḥikmah* is accompanied by the word *kitāb*, there are three Qur'anic occurrences in which the word *ḥukm*, instead of *ḥikmah*, is mentioned together with *kitāb* as well as *nubuwwah*.

The first instance is that in 3:79 that I have discussed in part above, under 3: 81. Again, the context is related to the Qur'anic approach to some of the People of the Book. The Qur'an invites the People of the Book to form a consensus on the absolute unity of God without any type of polytheism and then says (3:79-80),

> It is not for a mortal that God should give him the *kitāb*, *ḥukm*, and prophethood and that he should then say to the people, "Be worshippers/servants (*'ibād*) of mine rather than of God;" on the contrary (he would say), "Be pious scholars of the Lord (*rabbāniyyīn*) because of what you have taught of the *kitāb* and because of what you have studied." He would never order you to take the angels and the prophets as lords; what, would he order you to disbelieve, after you have surrendered?

Commentators assert that the word *ḥukm* in this verse has the same meaning as *ḥikmah*.[376] Some scholars simply argue that *ḥukm* here denotes comprehension, knowledge, and understanding.[377] Authorities on *tafsīr* are interested in the meaning of the *rabbāniyyīn* in the same verse. Their primary definition of the word is that the

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[374] Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, II: 273. See also 'Abd al-Razzāq, III: 165.

[375] Ibn Wahb, II: 285. On the authority of al-Zajjāj, Ibn al-Jawzī relates that *umm* means *aṣl*, as the origin of everything is its *umm*, and the Qur'an is established (*muthbat*) in God's presence in the Preserved Tablet. Ibn al-Jawzī, IV: 72. See also, al-Baghawī, IV: 133.

[376] Al-Ṭabarī, VI: 538; al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf* I: 440.

[377] Ibn al-Jawzī, I: 298; al-Baghawī, I: 320.

rabbāniyyīn refer to the possessors of *ḥikmah* (the *ḥukamā'*),[378] knowledge (the *'ulamā'*),[379] comprehension (the *fuqahā'*),[380] and forbearance (the *ḥulamā'*).[381] They piously practice *ḥikmah* and teach it to people.[382] Accordingly, *tafsīr* scholars report that when Ibn 'Abbās passed away, Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyyah said, "Today the *rabbānī* of this nation has died."[383] They also relate that 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib stated, "The *rabbānī* is the person who trains (*yurabbī*) his knowledge through his practice."[384]

Listing all the abovementioned definitions, al-Ṭabarī argues that the word *rabbāniyyūn* is the plural of *rabbānī*, which means a member of the *rabbān* [community] who teach people and arrange their affairs for the latter's own good. In accordance with this definition, a knowledgeable person possessing comprehension and *ḥikmah* can be considered as a *rabbānī*. Similarly, a godfearing *ḥakīm* as well as a just ruler can also be called *rabbānī*. The *rabbāniyyūn*, therefore, are the leaders of their community with respect to comprehension, knowledge, and this-worldly as well as other-worldly matters.

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[378] Sufyān b. Sa'īd al-Thawrī, *Tafsīr Sufyān al-Thawrī*, ed. Imtiyāz 'Alī 'Arshī (Rampur,1965): 36-37; al-Ṭabarī, VI: 540-544; Ibn al-Jawzī, I: 298; al-Māwardī, I: 405-406; al-Baghawī, I: 320-321; al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf* I: 440.

[379] Al-Thawrī, 36-37; 'Abd al-Razzāq, I: 399; al-Ṭabarī, VI: 540-544; Ibn al-Jawzī, I: 298; al-Māwardī, I: 405-406; al-Baghawī, I: 320-321; al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf* I: 440.

[380] Al-Ṭabarī, VI: 541-542; Ibn al-Jawzī, I: 298; al-Māwardī, I: 405-406; al-Baghawī, I: 320-321; al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf* I: 440.

[381] 'Abd al-Razzāq, I: 399.

[382] Al-Ṭabarī, VI: 542-544; Ibn al-Jawzī, I: 298; al-Baghawī, I: 321; al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf* I: 440.

[383] Al-Baghawī, I: 321; al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf* I: 440.

[384] Al-Baghawī, I: 320-321.

Combining knowledge and comprehension, they are insightful in ruling and arranging public affairs.[385]

For the second (6:89) and third (45:16) Qur'anic instances in which the words *kitāb* and *ḥukm* (as well as *nubuwwah*) are mentioned, *tafsīr* authorities do not introduce a detailed argument. Regarding the second instance, they simply report that the word *ḥukm* in this verse means comprehension and knowledge.[386] As for the third instance, they assert that it means knowledge of the *kitāb* and understanding of it.[387]

3. Those who were given *ḥukm*

In addition to the Children of Israel and the People of the Book, the Qur'an states that Lot, Joseph, Moses, David, Solomon, and John were given *ḥukm*.

Regarding Lot, verse 21:74 says, "And to Lot We gave *ḥukm* and knowledge, and We saved him from the city that had been doing deeds of corruption; they were an evil people, truly ungodly." Commentators argue that the word *ḥukm* in this verse means prophethood,[388] understanding and intellect,[389] and making a just judgment between opponents.[390]

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[385] Al-Ṭabarī, VI: 543-544. Al-Māwardī introduces a similar explanation when he argues that there are two opinions regarding the original meaning of the word *rabbānī*. First, the *rabbāni* is one who has authority in public matters. In this context, a knowledgeable person is called *rabbānī* on the basis of the fact that he arranges the matters with knowledge. Second, the *rabbānī* is one who has knowledge of the Lord, which is a religious concept. Al-Māwardī, I: 406.

[386] Ibn al-Jawzī, II: 51; al-Baghawī, II: 113.

[387] Al-Dinawarī, II: 302; Ibn al-Jawzī, IV: 99.

[388] Yaḥyā b. Sallām, *Tafsīr* I: 326; al-Māwardī, III: 455; Ibn al-Jawzī, III: 201.

[389] Ibn al-Jawzī, III: 201.

[390] Al-Māwardī, III: 455; al-Baghawī, III: 252.

According to the Qur'anic statement in 12:22, Joseph is described as being given *ḥukm* as follows, "And when he (Joseph) was fully grown, We gave him *ḥukm* and knowledge. And thus We reward the good-doers." *Tafsīr* authorities list a number of definitions of the word *ḥukm* in this verse, such as, 1) understanding,[391] 2) intellect,[392] 3) prophethood,[393] 4) comprehension,[394] 5) correctness in speech,[395] 6) authority over people,[396] and 7) knowledge and comprehension in the religion.[397] On the authority of al-Zajjāj, Ibn al-Jawzī reports that the word *ḥukm* refers to the fact that he (Joseph) was made (*ju'ila*) *ḥakīm*, for not every knowledgeable person (*'ālim*) is a *ḥakīm*. *Ḥakīm* is the knowledgeable person who practices his knowledge, and through his knowledge he refrains from undertakings about which he has no knowledge. Ibn al-Jawzī points also to the basic lexicographical definition of the word *ḥukm* as that which averts/prevents/restrains from (*yaṣrif*) ignorance and error (*khaṭa'*); it (*ḥukm*) prevents these two [negative characteristics] and holds the soul (*nafs*) back from that which dishonors it and gives it damage. The original meaning of the verbal form "*aḥkama*" in the language is "*mana'a*". Accordingly, a *ḥākim* is called *ḥākim* because he prevents/withholds/averts (*yamna'*) injustice (*ẓulm*) and perversion (*zaygh*). As for the

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[391] Al-Dīnawarī, I: 380; al-Ṭabarī, XVI: 23.

[392] Al-Ṭabarī, XVI: 23; al-Māwardī, III: 21; al-Baghawī, II: 417.

[393] Ibn al-Jawzī, II: 425; al-Māwardī, III: 21; al-Baghawī, II: 417.

[394] Ibn al-Jawzī, II: 425.

[395] Ibid., II: 425.

[396] Al-Māwardī, III: 21.

[397] Al-Baghawī, II: 417.

following word in the same verse (*'ilm*), Ibn al-Jawzī cites two possible interpretations as comprehension and knowledge of dreams/visions (*ru'yā*).[398]

In 28:14, it is Moses who is given *ḥukm* and knowledge; the verse reads, "And when he (Moses) was fully grown and in the perfection of his strength, We gave him *ḥukm* and knowledge; and thus We reward the good-doers." Similar to the explanations in the previous case, commentators report various interpretations of the word *ḥukm* in this verse including comprehension,[399] intellect,[400] and understanding.[401] Al-Baghawī concludes that Moses became knowledgeable and *ḥakīm* before he was sent as a Messenger (*nabiyy*).[402]

In another Qur'anic instance, the verses describe a scene between Moses and Pharaoh. God assigned Moses as a Prophet to the Children of Israel and instructed him and his brother Aaron to go Pharaoh and tell him that they were the Messengers of the Lord and that he (Pharaoh) should send forth the Children of Israel with them. Pharaoh was not pleased with this news and reminded Moses that the latter had been raised and fed by them for years during his childhood. Pharaoh also reminded Moses of his having slain the Egyptian and implied that Moses was not only a murderer but also ungrateful for the good treatment he had received in the past (26:16-19). Moses accepted the charge and said, "Indeed I did it then, being one of those that stray; so I fled from you, fearing you. But my Lord gave (*wahaba*) me *ḥukm* and made me one of the Messengers" (26:20-

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[398] Ibn al-Jawzī, II: 425. For similar expositions, see also al-Māwardī, III: 22; al-Baghawī, II: 417.

[399] Mujāhid b. Jabr, 525; al-Baghawī, III: 438.

[400] Mujāhid b. Jabr, 525; al-Baghawī, III: 438.

[401] Yaḥyā b. Sallām, *Tafsīr* II: 582; al-Dīnawarī, II: 120.

[402] Al-Baghawī, III: 438.

21). Early commentators assert that the word *ḥukm* in this verse could mean prophethood,[403] the Torah,[404] or understanding and knowledge.[405]

In the same *sūrah*, Abraham prays to God, saying (26:83), "My Lord, give me *ḥukm* and join me with the righteous." Similar to the explanations in Moses' case, *tafsīr* authorities assert that the word *ḥukm* here denotes understanding,[406] knowledge,[407] and intellect.[408] Yaḥyā b. Sallām interprets this passage as "make me firm in prophethood."[409] Al-Baghawī further elucidates such explanations, reporting that Ibn 'Abbās defined the word *ḥukm* in this verse as knowledge (*ma'rifah*) of the divine ordinance.[410]

David and Solomon are mentioned in the Qur'an as having been given *ḥukm* and knowledge. Commentators relate the following story related to this context: Two men came to David to resolve a conflict between them. One of them had a herd of sheep and the other a cultivated field. The sheep had gotten into the field and eaten up the crops and caused serious damage in the field. In compensation for the damage, David judged that the owner of the sheep had to give his herd to the owner of the field. But David's son, Solomon, still young as yet, suggested a different judgment. In his view, the owner

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[403] Yaḥyā b. Sallām, *Tafsīr* II: 499; al-Dīnawarī, II: 92.

[404] Al-Farrā', II: 279.

[405] Al-Dīnawarī, II: 92.

[406] Al-Dīnawarī, II: 97; al-Baghawī, III: 390.

[407] Al-Dīnawarī, II: 97.

[408] Al-Baghawī, III: 390.

[409] Yaḥyā b. Sallām, *Tafsīr* II: 508.

[410] Al-Baghawī, III: 390.

of the field should not take the sheep altogether permanently, but should detain them only until the damage to the field was recouped; in the meantime, he could benefit from the milk, wool, and newborn sheep. At the end, each party would receive his original property. David liked his son's judgment and gave his final decision accordingly.[411] Referring back to this story, the Qur'an says, "And [remember] David and Solomon, when they gave judgment (*yaḥkumān*) concerning the tillage – when the sheep of the people strayed there, and We bore witness to their judgment (*ḥukmihim*). And We made Solomon understand it, and to each We gave *ḥukm* and knowledge..." (21:78-79).

Ibn Wahb (d. 308/920) uses the words *ḥukm* and *ḥikmah* interchangeably in this verse and relates that Zayd (b. Aslam) defined *ḥikmah* here as intellect (*'aql*). Ibn Wahb also mentions Mālik's (b. Anas) (d. 179/795) aforementioned explanation of *ḥikmah* as meaning understanding in the religion of God (*fahm fī dīn-Allāh*); it is something that God places (*yudkhil*) in human hearts out of His mercy and grace.[412] Other scholars give similar definitions of the word *ḥukm*, such as understanding,[413] intellect, prophethood, power, and comprehension.[414] Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, on other hand, calls attention to the great responsibility of giving judgment in light of this verse. He says, "If this verse did not exist, I would think that [all] judges (*ḥukkām*) would be destroyed; but God praised

[411] Ibn al-Jawzī, III: 202; al-Baghawī, III: 253.

[412] Ibn Wahb, II: 130.

[413] Al-Dīnawarī, II: 27.

[414] Al-Māwardī, IV: 241.

(*ḥamida*) Solomon for his hitting upon the truth and David for his individual judgment (*ijtihād*)."[415]

Another Qur'anic personality to whom *ḥukm* was given is John (Yaḥyā). Having described his miraculous birth to his parents, Zachariah and his barren wife (19:1-11), the Qur'an reports that God charged John to take the *kitāb* with determination, stating that He had given him *ḥukm* while he was yet a little child (19:12). Commentators list various definitions of this *ḥukm*. Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and Zayd b. 'Alī describe *ḥukm* here as the innermost heart/intellect (*lubb*).[416] Yaḥyā b. Sallām interprets this word as understanding and intellect. He also relates an anecdote regarding John's exceptional characteristics even when he was a small child. The anecdote tells us that when John was a little child, his fellow children called him to play with them, but John replied, "We have not been created [just] for play."[417] Al-Ṭabarī also mentions that *ḥukm* in this instance refers to the fact that John was given understanding of the Book of God during his childhood.[418] Similarly, Ibn al-Jawzī reports that *ḥukm* denotes protecting (*ḥifẓ*) the Torah and its knowledge as well.[419]

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[415] Al-Shāfi'ī, *Tafsīr*, 163. Ibn al-Jawzī also relates the same saying, but with a difference at the end. According to his narration, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī said, "If this verse did not exist, I would think that [all] judges (*quḍāh*) would be destroyed; but God praised (*athnā 'alā*) Solomon for his hitting upon the truth and excused (*'adhara*) David for his individual judgment (*ijtihād*)." Ibn al-Jawzī, III: 203.

[416] Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, II: 106; Zayd b. 'Alī, 200. In the same place, Zayd b. 'Alī gives another definition of *ḥukm* in this verse as proof or evidence (*furqān*). It is worth mentioning that in another Qur'anic verse, John is described as a confirmer (*muṣaddiq*) of a Word from God, as well as a nobleman (*sayyid*), chaste, prophet, and righteous person. Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī defines the word *sayyid* in this verse as *ḥakīm*. Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, I: 211.

[417] Yaḥyā b. Sallām, *Tafsīr* I: 217. For the same story, see al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī al-'Askarī, *Tafsīr al-Imām Abī Muḥammad al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī al-'Askarī*, ed. Sayyid 'Alī 'Āshūr (Beirut, 2001): 515; al-Ṭabarī, XVI: 55; al-Māwardī, III: 360.

[418] Al-Ṭabarī, XVI: 55.

[419] Ibn al-Jawzī, III: 121.

Scholars of *tafsīr* use the words *ḥukm* and *ḥikmah* interchangeably for this verse as well. Ibn Wahb reports that Mālik (b. Anas) had told him regarding this verse that *ḥikmah* means obedience to God, comprehension in the religion, and practicing it. As mentioned previously, in the similar exposition of verse 2:269, Mālik elucidates his definition further, saying,

> You could find a person intelligent (*'āqil*) in this-worldly things but weak (*ḍa'īf*) in religious matters, while (on the other hand) you could find another person weak in this worldly things but knowledgeable (*'ālim*) and insightful (*baṣīr*) in religious matters. God gives this quality to the latter, but not to the former. As for *ḥikmah*, it is comprehension of the religion of God.[420]

In conclusion, the word *ḥikmah* occurs twenty times in the Qur'an and in half of these instances it is coupled with the word *kitāb*. This combination indicates that *ḥikmah* is intrinsically related to the divine revelation or prophetic practice (*sunnah*), being an extension and practice of this revelation. According to the Qur'anic statements, *ḥikmah* was given to the Prophets in general (3:81) and to the ones from Abraham's progeny (4:54) – including David (2:251, 38:20), Jesus (3:48, 5:110, 43:63), and Muḥammad (2:151, 3:164, 4:113, 17:39) – in particular.

There are other Qur'anic instances where the place of *ḥikmah* is taken by the word *ḥukm* which is also paired in three cases with *kitāb* (3:79, 6:89, 45:16). Early *mufassirūn* do not distinguish essentially between *ḥikmah* and *ḥukm* in these contexts. The Qur'an, furthermore, cites the names of the Prophets Lot, Joseph, Moses, Solomon, and John as having been given *ḥukm*. It also mentions Luqmān, who is not typically regarded as a prophet in the proper sense of the word but a pious and upright person, as having enjoyed *ḥikmah* (31:12). In addition to these historical personalities, in a more general

[420] Ibn Wahb, II: 130-131.

framework, the Qur'an says that God gives *ḥikmah* to whomever He wills and that those who are given *ḥikmah* have indeed been given much good (2:269).

In another way of classification, the Qur'anic *ḥikmah* is something "given" (the verb *atā*) by God 1) to the Prophets in general (3:81), 2) to the family of Abraham (4:54), 3) to David (2:251, 38:20), 4) to Luqmān (31:12), and 5) to whomever He wills (2:269). It is something "brought" (the verb *jā'a bi-*) by Jesus to clarify his people certain misconceptions (43:63). *Ḥikmah* is something "sent" (the verb *anzala*) to the believers (2:231) and to Muḥammad (4:113); it is something "revealed" (the verb *awḥā*) to Muḥammad (17:39); and it is something "to be remembered" (the verb *dhakara*) by the wives of Muḥammad (33:34). *Ḥikmah* is something to be used/practiced to call to the way of the Lord (16:125), and it is something far-reaching (54:5). It is also something "taught" (the verb *'allama*) by God to Jesus (3:48, 5:110). It is very interesting that according to the Qur'anic statements, Muḥammad is the only identified human being who would "teach" *ḥikmah* (2:151, 3:164, 62:2), for none of the other Prophets found in the Qur'an is mentioned to teach *ḥikmah*.

In the previous pages, having analyzed the word *ḥikmah* in each Qur'anic instance within its own context using related exegetical discussions, and having grouped the Qur'anic verses in which *ḥikmah* appears according to their context, I have come to the conclusion that it is not easy to give a single-word definition of this word in the Qur'an. Accordingly, I do not concur with Gutas when he repeatedly and persistently defines *ḥikmah* as "maxim" in the Qur'an. In this regard, his argument does not reflect a complete and proper understanding of the word. As I have discussed in the case of verse

38:20, this is partly due to Gutas' insufficient attention to the contextual and interdisciplinary scholarly elements in the texts he uses.

In 2:269, *ḥikmah* seems to be used in a broader sense and applicable to every individual. One may interpret this *ḥikmah* as the rationale or underlying reason of Qur'anic regulations generally. In 16:125, together with the word *maw'iẓah ḥasanah*, *ḥikmah* seems to indicate indispensable principles of religious invitation, which should be reasonable and considerate, but not contentious. A believer is expected to represent his faith intellectually as well as practically in sincerity and to leave the rest to God Who knows ultimately who is right and who is wrong.

A large number of the verses in which we see the word *ḥikmah* deal with the Messengers of God. In this regard, the Qur'an singles out the Prophets who came from Abraham's progeny. David, for instance, is described as having been given *ḥikmah* in a context related to his kingship (*mulk*). In his personal case, one can read *ḥikmah* in reference to the basic lexicographical meanings of the root *ḥ-k-m* as "*qaḍā*", "*'adala*" or "*mana'a min al-fasād*", since David is known as having ruled with utmost justice and prevented all sorts of injustice in his society.

In the case of Jesus, on the other hand, the Qur'an states that in addition to his other exceptional heavenly characteristics, Jesus was blessed by *ḥikmah*. God taught him the *kitāb*, the *ḥikmah*, the Torah, and the Gospel. Jesus, accordingly, came to his people with the clear signs and *ḥikmah* to clarify for them the points on which they had disagreement. Here the dominant meaning of *ḥikmah* seems to be *'ilm*, *iṣābah*, and *ḥilm*, rather than *qaḍā'*. But still, I would not define *ḥikmah* in the case of Jesus with a single word either.

The Qur'an says that God sent Muḥammad to recite His signs/verses to the believers, to purify them, and to teach them the *kitāb* and *ḥikmah*. As I have cited above, early *tafsīr* scholars mention a number of definitions of *ḥikmah* in relation to Muḥammad in the Qur'anic verses. Each of these definitions indicates a dimension of his character and none of them exclude other qualities. The meaning of *ḥikmah* in those Qur'anic contexts, therefore, could be *sunnah*, admonitions, the knowledge of lawful and unlawful things, comprehension of religion, correctness in speech and action, etc., all alike. This can also be seen in the use by commentators of citations from earlier authorities. It is not uncommon that one *mufassir* uses an account to explicate a certain verse, while another *mufassir* uses the same account with respect to another verse. Ibn Wahb, for instance, cites Mālik b. Anas' abovementioned definition of *ḥikmah* in the context of verse 19:12, while Ibn Abī Ḥātim makes use of it in verse 2:269. Likewise, a late commentator, al-Suyūṭi refers to the same hadith in relation to Luqmān in his interpretations of *ḥikmah* in verses both 2:269 and 31:12.

Thus early authorities of *tafsīr* do introduce various interpretations of *ḥikmah*, but this variety in expositions is inclusive in nature. This is an expected result of their general and recommended approach in Qur'anic studies, as it can be testified to a Prophetic statement, "One cannot reach comprehension completely until he discerns in the Qur'an numerous dimensions.[421] Introducing multiple meanings, therefore, does not refer to a kind of inconsistency or contradiction among various understandings; rather, they are complementary to one other.

[421] Ibn 'Aṭiyyah, I: 44-45.

THREE

Ḥikmah in Early Sufi Literature

Analyzing "technical concepts" in early Sufi writings is a matter of extreme difficulty and delicacy. A scholarly attempt to examine critically and comprehend individual terms in an atomistic manner often results in failure because these terms do not stand in isolation from other related and complementary concepts in these texts; rather, they constitute a highly organized technical system within a complex network of multiple conceptual interrelationships. Concentrating merely on etymology or original word meanings to fix and to define precisely the meanings of words does not help satisfactorily either, because context has a decisive impact on the vocabulary being used.

At the early stages of my inquiry into this problem, I was quite optimistic about being able to present a concrete historical background of Sufi epistemological concepts in general and of *ḥikmah* in particular. I assumed that a meticulous, systematic, historical and textual investigation of early Sufi works would basically enable me to realize this project. Such an exploration, I thought, would provide a clear picture of the semantic continuities, shifts and innovations in meaning of the fundamental concepts. In time, however, I began to realize the impenetrable nature of the subject matter. After all, I might well be able to write the histories of some usages of certain concepts in the arguments available in a number of texts, but how could I write their histories within the entire context of the early Sufi textual corpus, most of the constituent works of which have been lost forever in their original forms? In addition, I was aware of the fact that

information about the first usages of words and concepts provided in many lexicographical references is commonly known to be a matter of much debate in almost every language. I would be willing to devote this entire work to writing the history of words and terms frequently used in early Muslim mystical writings, but such an endeavor would inevitably fall short of determining the semantic alterations in the words designating a concept throughout its history. I have thus come to the conclusion that I should examine the notion of *ḥikmah* in early Sufi works as one element in a network of related concepts, rather than dealing with it as an individual term in an atomistic manner.[422] It is my hope that in doing so, I will be able to see and contextualize *ḥikmah* in a more nuanced fashion in the collective memory and usage of mystical authorities.

Such a methodology for unmasking the ambiguities of Sufi concepts still entails certain inherent difficulties. How could, for instance, an investigator make a clear distinction between the usages of a word in multiple passages to decide whether the author is using that word in a technical or in an everyday sense in each instance? Another point that should be taken into consideration is the fact that the meaning of every mystical utterance, written or spoken, must at the same time be considered an action

[422] An alternative scholarly way of dealing with such a conceptual inquiry could be the method embraced by Toshihiko Izutsu, who analyzes the semantics of central Qur'anic terms within the Qur'anic text alone. Limiting himself exclusively to this text rather than extending his investigation to other written materials as well, he tries to elaborate the key terms of the Qur'an in order to arrive eventually at a conceptual grasp of the *Weltanschauung* of the people who used the Arabic language to conceptualize and interpret the terminology of the Book. In this regard, I am especially referring to Izutsu's works, *God and man in the Koran* (Tokyo, 1964) and *Ethico-religious concepts in the Qur'an* (Montreal, 1966). The difficulty of examining technical terms properly within a variety of textual materials can be observed in Izutsu's industrious efforts, which again, in fact, focus on a single text, e.g., the Qur'an. Even within this context alone, Izutsu's analyses of the technical terms sometimes do not seem to pay sufficient attention to the chronology of the Qur'anic revelation, which occurred over a period of 23 years, for he mainly treats the same Qur'anic words across the whole body of the text as static expressions, though they may reflect various semantical emphases over time in a dynamic manner dependent upon the various occasions of revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*). By no means would I permit myself to undervalue Izutsu's meticulous scholarly examinations; rather, I simply mention his case as an example of the difficulty of the matter in question.

performed by the agent in order to accomplish his intentions. This occurs in a peculiar environment in which a Sufi becomes acquainted with mystical notions and the ways of expressing them. In this regard, statements of Sufis emerge as a means for emotional relief as well as intellectual reflection. A researcher is then expected to address the question of what kind of perspective a Sufi has in his reception of those concepts and what his modes of perception and evaluation are? To put it in another way, under which circumstances does the author make his statement and what concepts does he possess and use? And of course, on the side of the investigator, how can he write the intellectual history of such a scholarly tradition without falling into oversimplifications, repeating established inaccurate conventions, and thus mispresenting the actual situation? As far as my personal intellectual standpoint is concerned, I cannot guarantee that I will be able to provide satisfactory responses to all these questions, but this fact does not prevent my raising such issues, despite the fact that throughout my readings of the early Sufi works I feel that I am excessively exposed to the terminological sand thrown into my eyes by the authors intentionally to confuse and even blind the uninitiated.

Another difficulty in examining early Sufi terminology is that the definition and elucidation of many doctrines and concepts are only found in later authors such as al-Sarrāj (d. 378/988), al-Kalābādhī (d. 380/990), al-Makkī (d. 386/996), Abū Nu'aym (d. 430/1039), al-Hujwīrī (d. *ca.* 465/1072), and 'Aṭṭār (d. *ca.* 627/1229). These writers naturally use the language and terminology of their own times. Their categories are drawn in terms of contemporaneous linguistic conventions rather than those held by the original Sufi thinkers. Such an anachronistic, and to some extent, nostalgic and romanticizing reading of Sufi historical figures and concepts can possibly mislead the

reader in his request for a proper understanding of the points in question. Facing such textual and methodological difficulties, therefore, I am not very much inclined to make categorical statements about early Sufi figures and their doctrines. I treat with caution, for instance, reports asserting that the origins of the concepts of "the science of the hearts (*'ilm al-qulūb*)" and "gnosis (*ma'rifah*)" go back to al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and Dhū al-Nūn al-Miṣrī (d. 246/861), respectively.[423]

With these general remarks in mind, it is now time for me to describe my project in this chapter. In short, I will investigate *ḥikmah* in early Sufi writings in which it occurs in the context of these texts' epistemological constructs, especially in relation to *'ilm* (knowledge), *ma'rifah* (gnosis)[424], *'aql* (intelligence), *qalb* (heart) and *fiqh* (comprehension). In addition, these sources treat *ḥikmah* as a practical or applied concept in such a manner that without this aspect, they argue, *ḥikmah* cannot be understood and actualized properly. In what follows, therefore, I will examine the concept of *ḥikmah* within a network of associated concepts. The first of these conceptual networks is that of the earliest authoritative proto-Sufi figures, especially al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728) and Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765). Second, I will focus on *ḥikmah* within the contextual formulations of early Sufi exegetical works, including those of al-Thawrī (d. 161/778), al-Tustarī (d. 283/896), al-Sulamī (d. 412/1021), al-Tha'labī (d. 427/1035) and al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1074). Third, I will contextualize *ḥikmah* within the

[423] I think Arberry is right when he argues that the concept of *ma'rifah* was not introduced into Sufism by Dhū al-Nūn al-Miṣrī because Muslim ascetics who lived before him were already talking about this concept. A. J. Arberry, *Sufism* (London, 1950): 52. For the attribution of *'ilm al-qulūb* to al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, see Louis Massignon, *Essai sur les origines du lexique technique de la mystique musulmane* (Paris, 1968): 191.

[424] Throughout my writings I will use the word "gnosis" as a translation of *ma'rifah* in a technical sense, but without implying any of its associations with Christian Gnosticism.

organized totality of mystical concepts elucidated in early Sufi manuals and treatises, primarily those of al-Muḥāsibī (d. 243/857), al-Junayd (d. 298/910), al-Nūrī (d. 295/907), al-Tirmidhī, and al-Makkī. Finally, I will discuss the merit of *ḥikmah* in those writings and the ways that they explicate to attain this preferential notion. I will attempt to elucidate the modes of perception and inner formative forces of the early Muslim spiritual authorities as they are recorded in the scholarly sources.

Louis Massignon, Paul Nwyia, Süleyman Ateş, Gerhard Böwering and Bernd Radtke are among the modern scholars who have studied early Sufi thought and concepts, but none of them are particularly interested in *ḥikmah*. Massignon has contributed extensively to the study of early Muslim mystics. His works have decisively influenced the course of academic studies on the origins of Sufi terms in the western academic world.[425] I basically agree with Massignon when he argues that Sufism and its terminology are based on the Qur'an and thus are indigenous to Islam, not imported from outside. I believe that the Qur'an functioned as the principle source of contemplation and inspiration for the earliest ascetics and gnostically-minded Muslims. Throughout my investigation of *ḥikmah* and other related concepts, it is my hope that I will augment further Massignon's discussions regarding this question in early Sufism. My position, on the other hand, does not necessarily exclude the possibility that in the course of Sufism's later flourishing, some foreign ideas and concepts may well have infiltrated it.

In early Sufi texts, *ḥikmah* emerges as an elusive term which can be defined in English as "wisdom", "sagacity", "rationale", "underlying reason", "knowledge" or

[425] In addition to Massignon's substantial studies on al-Ḥallāj (d. 304/922), I am especially referring in this context to his works *Essai* and *Recueil de textes inédits concernant l'histoire de la mystique en pays d'islam* (Paris, 1929).

"mystic aphorism" depending on the context. To be able to analyze *ḥikmah* and its Qur'anic conceptualizations by early Sufi writers, I will first examine these writers' exegetical presentations of the topic. At this point, we again face the unfortunate scholarly situation that many of the early works have been lost forever in their original forms, not to mention that only a small percentage of extant works has been printed. In addition, the scholarly quality of some editions, as I will discuss below, seems to be quite questionable. I should also note that some contemporary scholars in the field, including and especially Radtke, question the authenticity of materials that have been routinely regarded as genuine works. Throughout this investigation, my main sources will be the fragments of Qur'anic commentary attributed to authors of the 2nd/8th century who are mentioned by the Sufi tradition as the forefathers of Sufi *tafsīr*, such as al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, and Sufyān al-Thawrī. In his categorization of the history of Sufi exegesis of the Qur'an (*al-tafsīr al-ishārī* or *al-fayḍī*), Ateş argues that the systematization of this kind of *tafsīr* was carried out by the scholars of the 3rd/9th and 4th/10th centuries; especially Sahl al-Tustarī, al-Junayd, and Abū Bakr al-Wāsiṭī (d. 320/932). Scholars of the following two centuries then wrote multi-volume exegeses of the Qur'an. The leading figures of this period are Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī, Abū Isḥāq al-Tha'labī and Abū al-Qāsim 'Abd al-Karīm al-Qushayrī.[426]

These authors record interpretations of Qur'anic verses relying on unveilings (*mukāshafāt*) experienced by themselves as well as by other earlier masters in Sufism. They argue that for each statement in the Book, in addition to the literal, outward or

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[426] Süleyman Ateş, *İşārī Tefsīr Okulu* (Ankara, 1974): 27-165. See also Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr wa-al-mufassirūn* (Cairo, 1976) II: 337-416; Gerhard Böwering, "The Qur'an Commentary of al-Sulamī," *Islamic studies presented to Charles J. Adams*, eds. Wael B. Hallaq and Donald P. Little (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991): 41-43.

exoteric (*ẓāhir*) meaning, there is an inward or esoteric (*bāṭin*) sense. This inward meaning is born in the heart of the gnostic (*'ārif*) in the process of spiritual practice and enlightenment. Sufi commentators do not claim that their interpretations are the only correct explanations. Instead, in their epistemological theories, they generally embrace a specific method that describes knowledge in an individualistic, experiential and existential manner. On the basis of their particular understanding of an ontological hierarchy of existence, which postulates a distinct subject-object relationship, they introduce a particular balance between ontology and epistemology. According to this epistemological theory, different explanations for the same object at different stages of the mystical path are quite possible, but in reality, they argue, this occurs in a concentric manner. Distinguished advanced Sufis are aware of this fact and they repeatedly underscore that there is no contradiction between the epistemological products of different levels of this hierarchy; rather, they assert, this occurrence happens in a complementary manner, or in other words, every esoteric or inward explanation springs from exoteric or outward statements that are found in authoritative religious sources. Sufi masters, at the same time, accept that such a theory may lead people who are not familiar with these notions to take mystical expositions presented by the Sufis as incoherent and confusing. Acknowledging this possibility, Sufis assert that such an exclusive theory of knowledge ultimately considers knowledge to be a form of individual "taste" or "intuitive perception" (*dhawq*) which can actually be neither tested by nor even described to/by others. Sufis exemplify their arguments by the fact that scientific definitions of concepts such as health and drunkenness differ in essence from the very nature of experiencing health and drunkenness themselves.

Such a peculiar epistemological theory, however, does not justify arbitrary and baseless interpretations. Sufi authorities set general principles for a proper mystical commentary as follows: 1) The inner meaning posited for a Qur'anic statement should not be contradictory to the external sense of that passage; 2) There should be an additional supporting attestation (*shāhid*) from corroborative texts to justify such an interpretation; 3) There should not be any obvious religious law or basic rational principle opposing it; and 4) Such an interpretation should not be presented as the only meaning of that statement.[427]

In the particular case of *ḥikmah*, for instance, the subtle balance between the *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin* dimensions of *ḥikmah* indicates their delicate instinctive correlation. Sufis state that God possesses the attributes of power (*qudrah*) and *ḥikmah* at the same time. He makes things available or visible (*aẓhara al-ashyā'*) out of His attribute of *qudrah* and He regulates things according to His *ḥikmah*. A person who trusts in God thoroughly (*mutawakkil*) does not fall into error regarding affirmation of His *ḥikmah*, because of what he sees in the world as a result of God's *qudrah*. These two attributes (*qudrah* and *ḥikmah*) operate in a very subtle way. Even though there might be situations in which *qudrah* and *ḥikmah* seem to be contradictory to each other, this is only an outward appearance. In reality, Sufis assert, they function complementarily to each other in perfect harmony. A *mutawakkil*, therefore, without being distracted by seemingly unpleasant occurrences in this world, should unfailingly keep this fundamental inner balance in his mind in the course of his religious life, for believing in fate (*qadar*)

[427] Ateş, *İşārī*, 19-21; al-Dhahabī, II: 377.

includes the essential principle that both good (*khayr*) and evil (*sharr*) are created by God Who is All-powerful (*qādir*) and All-*ḥakīm* at the same time.[428]

Of the earliest eminent figures in the mystical interpretation of the Qur'an, two names are specifically and recurrently underlined in Sufi texts, those of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and Ja'far al-Ṣādiq. Considering their pioneering positions in the Sufi literature, I will examine their cases individually.

I. *Ḥikmah* within a network of concepts in the treatment of the earliest Sufi authorities

1. Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728)

Almost every Sufi manual considers al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī among the earliest authorities to introduce initial examples of interpreting Qur'anic statements from a Sufi perspective. His posthumous influence on Islamic thought in general and on Sufism in particular makes him a legendary figure in Muslim scholarship, as his exemplary piety and asceticism are recorded over and over again.[429] Such a wide-ranging popularity makes of al-Ḥasan a multifaceted personality in Islamic intellectual tradition who is quite impossible to describe in a simple fashion. It would not be a complete portrayal to describe him as merely a *mufassir*, a *muḥaddith*, a *faqīh*, a *mutakallim* or a Sufi.

As far is his explanations of *ḥikmah* are concerned, it is evident that al-Ḥasan is mainly interested in the practical aspect of this concept. Al-A'mash (d. 148/765)

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[428] Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, ed. Sa'īd Nasīb Makārim (Beirut, 1995) II: 23-24.

[429] Massignon, *Essai*, 174-201; Ateş, *İşārī*, 39-46; 'Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī, *Tārīkh al-taṣawwuf al-islāmī* (Kuwait: 1975): 152-187; Soleiman Ali Mourad, *Early Islam between myth and history: Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110H/728CE) and the formation of his legacy in classical Islamic scholarship* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2006). Furthermore, Ibn al-Nadīm (d. *ca.* 380/990) reports that al-Ḥasan wrote a commentary on the Qur'an. Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist* (Cairo, 1957): 57.

describes al-Ḥasan saying, "Al-Ḥasan would keep devoting his attention to *ḥikmah* until he spoke in terms of it (*mā zāla al-Ḥasan ya'tanī bi-al-ḥikmah ḥattā naṭaqa bihā*)."[430] Al-Ḥasan defines the word *ḥikmah* in verses 2:29, 2:269, and 38:20 as *sunnah*,[431] moral scrupulousness (*wara'*) in the religion of God,[432] and understanding (*fahm*), [433] respectively.

Al-Ḥasan's definition of *ḥikmah* can be contextualized better in relation to his broader understanding of Sufism and its conceptions. He encourages the strictest observance of religious commands in sincerity and ascetic retrospection. In his view, the most important thing in an act is the intent (*niyyah*), which must be absolutely free of "eye-service" or hypocrisy (*riyā'*); as he says, "It is because the believer thinks good of God that his works are good; it is because the hypocrite thinks bad (*sū' al-ẓann*) of God that his works are bad."[434] On the one hand, al-Ḥasan was critical of the routine and blindly emotional pietism of certain *Ḥashwiyyah* traditionists. On the other hand, he attacked the formalistic understanding of religious commands by the scholars of law (*fuqahā'*). In the latter's case, al-Ḥasan argues, their knowledge and works are devoid of sincere intent, as they are mainly interested in an outwardly and superficial understanding of Qur'anic statements. Such scholars, in al-Ḥasan's view, are not deeply rooted in the Qur'anic commands and prohibitions, and their acts are in disagreement with, and thus

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[430] Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Editor's introduction, 21.

[431] Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, I: 115. See also al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manthūr*, I: 335.

[432] Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, I: 196.

[433] Ibid., II: 239.

[434] Quoted in Massignon, *Essai*, 187-188. Here Massignon rightly notes that this saying resonates a *ḥadīth* famous in Sufi circles. In the *ḥadīth*, God Himself speaks saying, "I am as My servant thinks of Me: if he thinks good, the good is his; if he thinks bad, the bad is his."

disprove, their words.[435] According to a statement by al-Jāḥiẓ, al-Ḥasan used to describe such a situation as follows,

> No man is entitled to the reality of faith as long as he allows himself to reproach others for a fault (*'ayb*) he himself commits, or to order them to correct their faults until having started doing so within himself. If he acts like that [this would mean] he has not corrected any fault but found an additional one within himself that he should correct.[436]

Al-Ḥasan's piety was not limited to his strict observance of religious precepts. He further practiced a sincere moral scrupulousness (*wara'*) and complete renunciation of all legally dubious actions (*shubuhāt*), as his asceticism consisted in a full abandonment of this-worldly things. This attitude led him to continuous sorrow (*ḥuzn*) and fear (*khawf*) of God in seclusion and introspection far away from the everyday politics of his time.[437] When he interprets the Qur'anic verse 19:55[438], al-Ḥasan states,

> O man, how could you be a [true] Muslim as long as your neighbor does not feel secure from yourself and how could you be a *mu'min* as long as people do not feel safe from you?[439]

What can be concluded from these and similar accounts is that in al-Ḥasan's view, Sufism and its concepts, including *ḥikmah*, represent an overall moral approach to this-worldly life and things. He does not seem to be that interested in articulating mystical terms elaborately in the technical sense, but instead appears to concentrate primarily on living a decent life in sincere integrity and spirituality. He talks about *ḥikmah* and other concepts in action. In his case, the intellectual explanations of these notions can better be

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[435] Massignon, *Essai*, 188-189.

[436] Al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-Bayān wa-al-tabyīn*, ed. 'Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn (Cairo, 1949) II: 135.

[437] Massignon, *Essai*, 190-192. Such an attitude, however, did not make al-Ḥasan unconcerned about the critical agenda of his time; for instance, he did not refrain from questioning the legitimacy of Yazīd's caliphate, nor from expressing his thoughts clearly in an alleged letter to the caliph 'Abd al-Malik regarding the concept of predestination of that time.

[438] "He (Ishmael) would enjoin upon his people prayer and alms-giving and he was pleasing to his Lord."

[439] Al-Jāḥiz, *al-Bayān wa-al-tabyīn* II: 135.

contextualized in relation to al-Ḥasan's general understanding of knowledge which is intended to be put into action, as it is action in turn that will lead to salvation. Thus, as long as knowledge falls short of action, it basically becomes a burden for the knower rather than a light indicating the straight path, which is the original function of knowledge in Islam. Such teachings of al-Ḥasan's have come down to us only in the form of fragments recorded by later writers on Islamic intellectual history. Fortunately we are on firmer textual ground with Ja'far.

2. Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765)

Alongside al-Ḥasan, Sufi scholarly sources mention the name of Ja'far as one of the founding fathers of mystical tradition in Islam. Abū Nu'aym and 'Aṭṭār list Ja'far's name at the head of the line of saints in their hagiographical works.[440] Ja'far's contribution to Sufi thought and terminology was enormous. Much like al-Ḥasan, Ja'far tried to detach himself from all types of governmental issues and held a quietist and inactive personal morality with respect to the political intrigues of his time. He sought to disengage himself from this-worldly things as much as possible. Illustrating this fact, Abū Nu'aym reports the following saying of Ja'far: "God revealed to the world: 'Serve those who serve Me, and weary of those who serve you.'"[441]

In fact, Ja'far is quite an enigmatic figure in Muslim scholarship and his critical and wide-ranging influence on subsequent generations is recorded by historians and

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[440] Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣfahānī, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā'* (Cairo, 1932-1938) III: 192-206. Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār, *Tadhkirat al-awliyā'*, ed. Reynold A. Nicholson (London, 1905) I: 9-15. Al-Hujwīrī states that Ja'far wrote famous books in explanation of Sufism. 'Alī b 'Uthmān al-Jullābī al-Hujwīrī, *The Kashf al-maḥjūb*, trans. Reynold A. Nicholson (London, 1959): 78.

[441] Abu Nu'aym, III: 194.

biographers alike. A member of the family of the Prophet (*ahl al-bayt*), he came to be seen as the sixth Imam in Shiite Islam, was reputed to be a teacher of Abū Ḥanīfah (d. 150/767) in *fiqh*, and was a quite venerated early authority in Sufism at the same time. In the reports by Jābir b. Ḥayyān (d. *ca.* 184/800) – who lived in the second/eighth century and is regarded as the father of Islamic alchemy and a prolific writer on Islamic-Hermetic philosophy – Ja'far's name is recurrently mentioned as being Jābir's foremost master and scholarly source.[442] Dhū al-Nūn al-Miṣrī's name in turn is mentioned as the main transmitter of Jābir's doctrines on alchemy in the third/ninth century.[443]

Many accounts relating to the science of letters (*'ilm al-ḥurūf* or *jafr*) in the Qur'an, including the knowledge of the "disconnected/isolated letters (*al-ḥurūf al-muqaṭṭa'ah*)" or the "opening letters (*ḥurūf al-fawātiḥ*)" at the beginning of twenty-nine Qur'anic suras go back to Ja'far. In classical *tafsīr* methodology, the knowledge of these letters is regarded as being reserved only to God and considered to belong to the absolutely unknowable (*al-mutashābih al-muṭlaq*) parts of the Qur'anic text.[444] Similarly, some moral *aḥādīth* explaining obscure points in the Qur'an in a mystical tone

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[442] Ibn al-Nadīm, 512-514. Al-Shahristānī (d. 548/1153) reports that Ja'far was a very knowledgeable person in religious matters and had perfect good manners (*adab kāmil*) in *ḥikmah*. He was a mature ascetic with respect to this world and a completely scrupulous person regarding this-worldly desires. Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Karīm al-Shahristānī, *Kitāb al-Milal wa-al-niḥal*, ed. Muḥammad b. Fatḥ Allāh Badrān (Cairo, 1956) I: 147. For Ja'far's thought and spirituality, see John B. Taylor, "Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, spiritual forebear of the Sufis," *Islamic Culture* 40.2 (1966): 97-113; Taylor, "Man's knowledge of God in the thought of Ja'far al-Ṣādiq," *Islamic Culture* 40.4 (1966): 195-206; Ateş, *İşārī*, 46-55.

[443] Massignon, *Essai*, 207. Actually, I think Massignon confuses two al-Miṣrīs here in his quotation from Ibn al-Nadīm, who says that as a disciple of Jābir, Dhū al-Nūn wrote two treatises on alchemy, *Rukn akbar* and *Thiqah*, but they are lost. Ibn al-Nadīm does not mean Dhū al-Nūn al-Miṣrī, but rather Ibn 'Iyāḍ al-Miṣrī, whom Ibn al-Nadīm mentions as a disciple of Jābir. See Ibn al-Nadīm, 514, 517-518 and 520. In the final analysis, however, whether he was historically a disciple of Jābir or not, Dhū al-Nūn is treated as a personality among the early Sufis espousing doctrines in line with those of Ja'far.

[444] See for instance, al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān fī 'ulūm al-Qur'ān* (Lahore, 1980) II: 8-12.

began to circulate in Sufi circles and their narration is attributed to Ja'far as well.[445] Most of his scholarly inheritance, however, is not recorded in the Sufi texts that have survived down to our day.

In the introduction to his *Ḥaqā'iq*, al-Sulamī speaks of Ja'far's expositions of the Qur'anic statements as "arranged in no order (*'alā ghayr tartīb*)".[446] According to al-Sulamī, Ja'far asserts that the Book of God is based on four things: verbal expression (*'ibārah*), allusion or allegorical expression (*ishārah*), refined expressions/inner subtleties (*laṭā'if*), and realities (*ḥaqā'iq*). These are directed to the common people (*'awāmm*), the spiritual elect (*khawāṣṣ*), the friends (*awliyā'*) of God and the prophets (*anbiyā'*) respectively.[447]

Regarding the word *ḥikmah* in16:125, Ja'far gives an ambiguous definition when he says that calling (*du'ā'*) with/by means of *ḥikmah* denotes inviting from God to God through God (*min Allāh ilā Allāh bi-Allāh*).[448] This expression might be referring to the idea of the cyclical nature of the spiritual journey, as a wayfarer goes through a process whose eventual destination is acting through (*bi*) God. This idea indicates that a Sufi does not possess or do anything as an independent and separate individual, but gets lost in

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[445] Ateş, *İşārī*, 47-55. Ateş, *Sülemī ve tasavvufī tafsīri* (Istanbul, 1969): 113-118. At the same time, Ateş questions the historical reality and authenticity of the many reports attributed to Ja'far regarding *'ilm al-ḥurūf*. Ateş accuses al-Kulaynī (d. 329/940) of distorting Ja'far's legacy in Muslim scholarship through introducing absurd narrations. The basis of Ateş's argument is the fact that even though some other eminent Muslim scholarly authorities such as Sufyān al-Thawrī, Mālik b. Anas and Abū Ḥanīfah studied in Ja'far's circle, none of them related from Ja'far anything similar to what al-Kulaynī relates. Ateş, *İşārī*, 48-49.

[446] Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī, *Ḥaqā'iq al-tafsīr*, ed. Sayyid 'Umrān (Beirut, 2001) I: 20.

[447] Al-Sulamī, *Ḥaqā'iq* I: 22; Nwyia, "Le Tafsīr," 188.

[448] Al-Sulamī, *Ḥaqā'iq* I: 378; Nwyia, "Le Tafsīr," 205. In his *Ziyādāt al-tafsīr*, al-Sulamī phrases the same definition as, "*ḥikmah* means a call/invitation from God to God and through His command on the basis of His will." Al-Sulamī, *Ziyādāt Ḥaqā'iq al-tafsīr*, ed. Gerhard Böwering (Beirut, 1995): 79.

and thus participates in the Divine attributes; for he attributes everything to God, not to himself. In the case of verse 38:20, Ja'far asserts that *ḥikmah* and *faṣl al-khiṭāb* mean to be correct in speech, sound in belief,[449] and steadfast in one's affairs.[450] In another verse (48:4), Ja'far explains the word *ḥakīm* concerning God as, "He is *ḥakīm* in his commands and prohibitions through His good direction/organization (*bi-ḥusn tadbīrihi*)."[451]

According to Ja'far's terminology, *ḥikmah* is closely connected to the Qur'anic concepts of *'aql* and *qalb*. He explains the word *ḥikmah* in verse 31:12 in relation to Luqmān as *fahm* and *'aql*.[452] He defines the word *qalb* in 50:37 as *'aql* as well.[453] The concept of *qalb*, in Ja'far's view, emerges as a very active epistemological notion. The *qalb* listens (*yasma'*), understands (*ya'qil*), and sees (*yubṣir*).[454] These notions, however, are meaningful as long as they are realized within a decent spiritual practice.

In Ja'far's view, following a good course of action, courtesy or right behavior (*adab*) in sincerity is the most essential part of religious life to such an extent that he says, "Whoever does not have *adab*, does not have religion either."[455] He similarly

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[449] In fact, in al-Sulamī's narration, the expression is "*ṣiḥḥat al-'aqd*" which can literally be translated into English as "soundness of agreement", but I could not make reasonable sense out of such a literal translation in this specific context. Therefore, I have understood this expression in the sense of "holding true opinions, believing correct things about reality." Al-Sulamī, *Ḥaqā'iq* II: 184.

[450] Al-Sulamī, *Ḥaqā'iq* II: 184; Nwyia, "Le Tafsīr," 219.

[451] Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, *Kāmil al-tafsīr al-ṣufī al-'irfānī li-al-Qur'ān*, ed. 'Alī Zay'ūr (Beirut, 2002): 246.

[452] Muḥammad b. Ya'qūb al-Kulaynī, *Uṣūl al-kāfī*, ed. 'Abd al-Ḥusayn b. 'Abd Allāh al-Muẓaffar (Najaf, 1956) I: 58.

[453] Al-Kulaynī, I: 58. The verse reads, "Indeed, in that is a reminder whoever has a heart (*qalb*)..."

[454] Nwyia, "Le Tafsīr," 221. Linguistically it is worth noticing that the Qur'an uses only the verbal form of the root *'-q-l*. On the basis of this fact Muslim scholars argue that the Qur'an emphasizes an active, experiential form of this notion, rather than merely an inactive concept in its noun form (*'aql*). See for instance, Muḥammad 'Alī al-Jūzū, *Mafhūm al-'aql wa-al-qalb fī al-Qur'ān wa-al-Sunnah* (Beirut, 1983): 55-56.

[455] Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, *al-Ḥikam al-Ja'fariyyah*, ed. 'Ārif Tāmir (Beirut, 1957): 25.

asserts, "There is no (heavenly) response to anyone other than those who are sincere."[456] He also states, "The closest ones among you to God are those who are best in religion in terms of *adab*."[457] Another crucial related concept, "thinking well (*ḥusn al-ẓann*)", emerges along the way, with regard to which Ja'far notes, "Thinking well of God is the complete religion."[458]

Even though Sufi sources do not attribute any *Malāmatī* type of externally blameworthy and anti-social practices to Ja'far, some anecdotes nevertheless imply that he did try to conceal his ascetic and spiritual qualities from unqualified people. On the authority of Sufyān al-Thawrī, Abū Nu'aym relates that one day when Sufyān saw Ja'far wearing a full-sleeved robe of silk, he reproached the latter for his appearance on account of the fact that no one from his blessed fathers would have worn such a dress. Whereupon Ja'far rolls back the sleeve of his robe and discloses another white robe of wool beneath it and says, "O al-Thawrī, our robe here is for the sake of God, and the other is for you. We have hidden that which is for God and disclosed that which is for you."[459]

In conjunction with *ḥikmah*, Ja'far highlights the concepts of forbearance (*ḥilm*), *'ilm* and *'amal* in his understanding of religion. He states, "The closest of you to God in rank are those who show forbearance better in times of anger."[460] He puts a special

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[456] Ibid., 60.

[457] Ibid., 25.

[458] Ibid., 71.

[459] Abu Nu'aym, III: 193. For the same story with some modifications see, 'Aṭṭār, I: 12.

[460] Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, *al-Ḥikam*, 53.

emphasis on knowledge and practice together saying, "Knowledge without practice is like a ship without a sailor."[461] As I have noted in the previous chapters, one of the most common definitions of *ḥikmah* by the early scholarly authorities was that *ḥikmah* meant "knowledge and practice (*'ilm wa-'amal*); a man is not called *ḥakīm* unless he combines the two."[462] In a similar fashion, Ja'far remarks in his interpretation of verse 35:28[463] that fear of those with knowledge (*'ulamā'*) occurs with respect to their assiduous observance of acts of worship, their scrupulous attention to information regarding God, their diligent effort to follow Prophetic instructions, and their thorough awareness of the necessity of being in the service of saints.[464] All these, expectedly, require comprehensive knowledge for which the fundamental means, in Ja'far's view, is *'aql*.

Ja'far constantly appreciates the merit of intellect (*'aql*) with respect to religion (*dīn*), which he defines as a "means by which man worships the Merciful (*mā 'ubida bi-hi al-Raḥmān*)."[465] He argues that intellect and religion are intrinsically connected to each other when he states, "He who has intellect has religion (*dīn*), and he who has religion enters Paradise."[466] *'Aql*, Ja'far says, is the most precious thing to God, and it is through *'aql* that He commands or prohibits, rewards or punishes.[467] In Ja'far's view, the

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[461] Ibid., 64.

[462] Ibn Qutaybah, *Tafsīr gharīb al-Qur'ān*, 32. In a similar fashion Abū Sa'īd al-Kharrāz (d. 286/899) underlines the necessity of putting knowledge into practice when he says, "The whole of knowledge (*'ilm*) is an affliction (*balā'*) until it is put into practice." Abū Sa'īd al-Kharrāz, *Kitāb al-Ṣidq*, ed. 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd (Cairo, 1972): 61.

[463] "Only those from among God's servants who have knowledge fear Him."

[464] Nwyia, "Le Tafsīr," 217.

[465] Ibid., I: 20.

[466] Ibid., I: 27.

[467] Ibid., I: 91.

religious comprehension and deep-rootedness of a man occur in proportion to his intellectual capacity. On the authority of the Prophet, Ja'far says, "When you hear of a good person (*ḥusn hāl*), pay close attention to his *'aql*, as he is/will be judged in proportion to his *'aql*."[468] Ja'far reports that the Prophet explained the Qur'anic notion of "men of understanding (*ulū al-albāb*)" as "men of intellect (*'uqalā'*)".[469] In the same context, Ja'far also relates that the Prophet said, "We, the community of prophets, have been commanded to address people in proportion to their intellects."[470] Ja'far further notes, "A single man of comprehension (*faqīh*) has more power over Iblīs than a thousand worshippers (*'ābid*)";[471] and "A knowledgeable person (*'ālim*) who makes use of his knowledge is more virtuous than seventy thousand worshippers."[472] Ja'far relates another Prophetic statement which reads, "When you see a person who prays and fasts a lot, do not be proud of him until you see the level of his *'aql*."[473]

Ja'far considers *'aql* to be the basis of the religious responsibility (*taklīf*) of mankind. By *'aql* he means much more than our modern understanding of the human faculty responsible for cognitive reasoning alone. In his view, *'aql* is a heavenly gift to mankind and its origin and reality go far beyond the limitations of this world. In his report, *'aql* was the first of the spiritual (*rūḥānī*) things to be created from the light of

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[468] Ibid., I: 31.

[469] Ibid., I: 35.

[470] Ibid., I: 78. Al-Sulamī reports the same *ḥadīth* in the context of verse 16:125 where he explains the word *ḥikmah*. Al-Sulamī, *Ḥaqā'iq* I: 377.

[471] Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, *al-Ḥikam*, 64.

[472] Al-Kulaynī, II: 26.

[473] Ibid., I: 92.

God, and it is the primary guide to attaining reliable knowledge.[474] The T/truth (*ḥaqq*), in Ja'far's opinion, can be attained through obedience (*ṭā'ah*) to God, and salvation (*najāh*) through obedience. Obedience in turn is dependent on *'ilm* and *'ilm* on learning (*ta'allum*), which is in the end dependent on *'aql*. *'Aql* leads to the acquisition of a sound learning, *'ilm*, salvation, obedience and T/truth in succession.[475] In Ja'far terminology, therefore, *'aql* is the primary source, seat and means of knowledge at the same time.

Ja'far further elucidates his theory of knowledge when he states that the most essential quality of a human being is his *'aql*, which has four basic aspects: perspicacity/discernment (*fiṭnah*), understanding (*fahm*), memory (*ḥifẓ*) and knowledge (*'ilm*). When a person's *'aql* receives firm and stable support from the light of God, these characteristics of *'aql* become active and work towards gaining the most reliable kind of knowledge.[476] No one can prosper until he uses his *'aql* properly and no one can use his *'aql* properly until he acquires knowledge.[477] It is within this framework, Ja'far asserts, that one should understand the Prophetic statement saying, "Seeking knowledge (*'ilm*) is compulsory for every Muslim."[478] Ja'far concludes that such an inquiry should be carried out thoroughly: "Study religion comprehensively (*tafaqqahū fī al-dīn*)."[479] Only then

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[474] Ibid., I: 74-75.

[475] Ibid., I: 66.

[476] Ibid., I: 89.

[477] Ibid., I: 92.

[478] Ibid., II: 5-6.

[479] Ibid., II: 14.

would a servant be on the straight path and assured of heavenly support. As Ja'far puts it, "If God wills good for a servant, He gives him comprehension in religion."[480]

Ja'far seems to be quite realistic when he states that practically not all men will attain a thorough *'ilm*. In this regard he categorizes human beings into three major groups: the knowledgeable (*'ālim*), learner (*muta'allim*), and scum (*ghuthā'*).[481] Only the first group will be able to attain knowledge. Ja'far further elucidates the characteristics of this first group and says, "The *'ālim* has three qualities: *'ilm*, forbearance (*ḥilm*) and silence (*ṣamt*)."[482] Such statements indicate that Ja'far takes a kind of elitist approach regarding *'ilm*. In his view, since *'ilm* is a product of *'aql*, which is the most precious thing, as it was the first spiritual thing to be created from the light of God, it can belong only to deserving persons. From this fact, it follows naturally that those who possess knowledge should be treated with utmost respect in Muslim society.[483] This privileged status, at the same time, puts a huge responsibility on the shoulders of persons of knowledge. They may not be excused for certain small mistakes for which ordinary people might be pardoned. In addition, knowledgeable people should not misuse their *'ilm*, but rather should complete it with diligent practice. Ja'far illustrates this point saying, "If men of knowledge do not act in accordance with their *'ilm*, their admonitions slip off people's hearts like rain on rocks."[484] He asserts further that whoever behaves

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[480] Ibid., II: 23.

[481] Ibid., II: 29.

[482] Ibid., II: 41.

[483] Ibid., II: 42.

[484] Ibid., II: 70.

humbly for the sake of God enjoys the most of intellect,[485] while on the other hand, whoever admires himself selfishly merely entertains himself with weakness of intellect.[486] In his interpretation of verse 35:28, Ja'far points out that the word *'ulamā'* in this verse refers to persons of knowledge whose acts conform to their words; otherwise they do not deserve to be called *'ulamā'*.[487] In Ja'far's view, as long as *'ilm* does not result in certain practical manifestations such as forbearance, humbleness and moral scrupulousness, merely seeking after it as a mental activity does not conform to basic Islamic intellectual principles.[488]

In this context, Ja'far introduces another essential religious concept: faith (*īmān*). Reminding us of the Qur'anic coupling of faith and righteous deeds (*a'māl ṣāliḥah*), Ja'far calls our attention closely to the interdependence of *īmān*, *'ilm* and *'amal*. In fact, he employs the word *ma'rifah* in this framework, which shows that he uses such related concepts interchangeably throughout his expositions. The usage of *ma'rifah* as a Sufi technical term superior to *'ilm* does not occur in Ja'far's terminology. Most of the early Sufi-manual writers and biographers, including al-Sarrāj, al-Kalābādhī, al-Makkī and al-Sulamī, do not associate Ja'far's name with *ma'rifah* in the strict sense. It is only al-Hujwīrī who mentions Ja'far's name in relation to *ma'rifah*.[489] Ja'far simply asserts that

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[485] Ibid., I: 58.

[486] Ibid., I: 94.

[487] Ibid., II: 39.

[488] Ibid., II: 38. Underlining the same principle in the particular case of *ḥikmah*, Dhū al-Nūn says, "*Ḥikmah* does not reside in a stomach that is filled with food." 'Abd al-Karīm b. Hawāzin al-Qushayrī, *al-Risalāh* (Egypt: 1959): 9. Likewise, when he was asked about the way in which he attained such a high level of *ma'rifah*, Abū Yazīd al-Biṣṭāmī responded, "Through an empty stomach and a body without clothes." Al-Qushayrī, *al-Risalāh*,14.

[489] Al-Hujwīrī, 78-79. For the basic meanings of *'ilm* and *ma'rifah* and their various usages by authors at the earliest stages of Muslim metaphysical thought, see Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant*, 165-193. For

'amal and *ma'rifah* are reciprocally dependent. Each of them is a prerequisite for the other and one can never leave the other aside in the course of staying steadfast in sound *īmān*.[490]

Having visited various elucidations on the concept of *ḥikmah* within a network of related epistemological terms as presented by the two earliest pioneering Sufi figures, al-Ḥasan and Ja'far, I would now like to examine the writings of Sufi exegetes of subsequent centuries in the formative period of Sufi Qur'an commentary.

II. *Ḥikmah* within the contextual formulations of early Sufi exegetical works

The authors of Sufi commentary do not embrace a single method in presenting their discussions. Compared to al-Sulamī, for instance, al-Tha'labī cites more extensively from the previous mainstream tradition of *tafsīr*. Throughout his discussions, the latter deals with linguistic and legal matters more elaborately than does the former. Similarly, despite the fact that al-Qushayrī is very much influenced by al-Sulamī and uses material from *Ḥaqā'iq al-tafsīr* copiously in his *Laṭā'if*, he eliminates the transmission chains for the narrations he quotes from al-Sulamī. He also expounds upon Qur'anic verses dealing with legal matters, unlike al-Sulamī.

In principle, the writers of *ishārī* (allegorical) commentary do not disregard the literal meaning of Qur'anic verses, nor do they treat other exegetes of a more traditional

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an analytic examination of the concept of *ma'rifah* in Sufism, but mainly on the basis of secondary literary sources, see Reza Shah-Kazemi, "The notion and significance of *ma'rifa* in Sufism," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 13 (2002): 155-181.

[490] Al-Kulaynī, II: 65. Emphasizing the same principle, on the authority of Wahb b. Munabbih (d. 110/728), al-Makkī relates, "Faith (*īmān*) is naked (*'uryān*); its dress (*libās*), ornament (*zīnah*) and fruit (*thamarah*) are God-fearingness/God-consciousness (*taqwā*), modesty (*ḥayā'*) and knowledge (*'ilm*), respectively. Al-Makkī, *Qūt* I: 286.

and conventional character disrespectfully. Rather, they make use of previous linguistic expositions and narrated materials as the bases of their arguments and in this regard, exegetical discussions of the Sufis have a very concentric nature. Inward meanings emerge out of the outward senses of Qur'anic expressions. So far as their specifically esoteric expositions are concerned, the Sufi authors, as expected, rely primarily on their predecessors in their Qur'anic *tafsīr ishārī*. I would now like to examine the concept of *ḥikmah* in the expositions of leading Sufi commentators of the formative period of this field, in roughly chronological order.

1. Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 161/778)

With an expectation that I could find further elucidation of *ḥikmah* in the writings by Sufyān al-Thawrī, who was one of Ja'far's close companions, I have industriously examined his *tafsīr*. Unfortunately, so far as al-Thawrī's expositions in this *tafsīr* are concerned, he does not seem to put any special emphasis on this notion. The only Qur'anic instance for which he gives a related explanation is verse 3:79, which reads,

> It is not for a mortal that God should give him the *kitāb*, *ḥukm* and prophethood and that he should then say to the people, "Be worshippers/servants (*'ibād*) of mine rather than God;" on the contrary (he would say), "Be pious scholars of the Lord (*rabbāniyyīn*) because of what you have taught of the *kitāb* and because of what you have studied." He would never order you to take the angels and the prophets as lords; what, would he order you to disbelieve, after you have surrendered?

Al-Thawrī interprets the word *rabbāniyyīn* in this verse as *ḥukamā'* and *'ulamā'*, which may both possibly be translated as "sages" and "scholars" without implying a technical meaning for the term *ḥukamā'*.[491]

[491] Al-Thawrī, 37. Al-Sulamī reports a similar definition of *rabbāniyyīn*, saying that they have knowledge of God and are the *ḥukamā'* among His servants. Citing al-Wāsiṭī's (d. 331/942) interpretation of the same word, al-Sulamī further says, "*Rabbāniyyūn* are those who own [this-worldly] things, while nothing owns them." Al-Sulamī, *Ḥaqā'iq* I: 103.

According to al-Makkī's reports, al-Thawrī divides scholars (*'ulamā'*) into three major categories: 1) those who have knowledge of God and His commands (*'ālim bi-Allāh wa-bi-amr Allāh*) – this group represents competent/complete scholars (*al-'ālim al-kāmil*); 2) those who have only knowledge of God – this category includes the God-fearing/God-conscious scholars (*al-taqī al-khā'if*); and, 3) those who have knowledge of God's command but not of Himself – these are impudent/disrespectful scholars (*al-'ālim al-fājir*).[492] Upon being asked about *'ilm*, Sufyān said, "It is scrupulousness (*wara'*)." When he was further asked about the meaning of *wara'*, he replied, "It means seeking knowledge through which *wara'* can be learned, and in the eyes of authorities, *wara'* actually means lengthening one's silence and shortening one's speech."[493] Such statements indicate that al-Thawrī was primarily concerned with a pious religious life based on existential and experiential spirituality. In his view, every epistemological acquisition, including *ḥikmah*, derives from and develops out of such diligent and sincere practice. Another declaration expressed by the earliest Sufi authorities as narrated by al-Makkī further indicates this notion" "Indeed God loves humble (*mutawāḍi'*) scholars and detests arrogant (*jabbār*) ones. Whoever behaves humbly for the sake of God, God causes him learn/know *ḥikmah*."[494] Therefore, setting a good personal example constitutes an essential part of scholars' functions in their societies, for depending on their performance other people will have their first acquaintance with religious notions in question. On the authority of Jesus, al-Makkī relates,

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[492] Al-Makkī, *Qūt* I: 290.

[493] Ibid., I: 290.

[494] Ibid., I: 292.

> The likeness of the scholars of evil (*'ulamā' al-sū'*) is a rock that has fallen into the mouth of a river (*fam al-nahr*). The rock does not imbibe the water, but does not leave it to get to the field either. Likewise is the [case of the] scholars of this world; they remain sitting down [as opposed to moving forward] on the way of the Hereafter. Such scholars are not able to reach people, but they do not leave them to pursue their journey to God either.[495]

2. Sahl al-Tustarī (d. 283/896)

Al-Tustarī appears to be the earliest authority on Sufi *tafsīr* to introduce a relatively full-fledged treatment of *ḥikmah*. In fact, in addition to a work on *tafsīr*, Fuat Sezgin lists an epistle, *Risālah fī al-Ḥikam wa-al-taṣawwuf*, attributed to al-Tustarī.[496] On the basis of its title, the epistle seemed very promising to me with respect to its author's treatment of *ḥikmah*, but unfortunately, I discovered that the epistle is not a complete work. Furthermore, it is simply a 7th/13th century selection of al-Tustarī's sayings collected from his other works as well as from al-Qushayrī's *al-Risālah*.[497]

In his *tafsīr*, as noted in the previous chapter, al-Tustarī reports an explanation of *ḥikmah* by the Prophet, who states that the Qur'an is God's *ḥikmah* among His servants. The Prophet likens the religious condition of people who learn the Qur'an and practice its instructions to prophethood, with the exception that they do not receive revelation. But still they are treated like the prophets except that they do not have prophetic missions.[498] Another Prophetic statement also defines *ḥikmah* as the Qur'an. According to this account, those who learn the Qur'an in their youth receive an innate familiarity with it to

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[495] Ibid., I: 293.

[496] Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des Arabischen Schrifttums* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1967) I: 647.

[497] Al-Tustarī, Editor's introduction, 9; Böwering, *The Mystical*, 11.

[498] Al-Tustarī, 42. For the same *ḥadīth*, see also al-Sulamī, *Ziyādāt*, 20.

such an extent that it is as if the Qur'an were to have become a component of their bodies, which would consequently not be touched by hell-fire.[499]

On the authority of previous scholars, al-Tustarī lists the definitions of *ḥikmah* as follows: a) *Ḥikmah* means the Qur'an as it occurs in verse 16:125; b) *Ḥikmah* refers to understanding of the Qur'an (*fahm fī al-Qur'ān*); c) *Ḥikmah* denotes prophethood as in the case of verses 38:20 and 2:251;[500] d) *Ḥikmah* means comprehension of the religion of God (*fiqh fī dīn Allāh*) and following the Messenger of God;[501] e) *Ḥikmah* denotes intellect (*'aql*);[502] f) *Ḥikmah* is the fear of God (*khashyat Allāh*);[503] and g) *Ḥikmah* means correctness/hitting upon the truth in the book of God, as in the case of verses 2:269 and 33:34.[504] Al-Tustarī also cites Ibn 'Umar's (d. 73/692) explanation of *ḥikmah* as,

> *Ḥikmah* is of three kinds: a clearly intelligible verse (*āyah muḥkamah*), an earlier *sunnah* (*sunnah māḍiyah*), and a tongue that speaks by/through the Qur'an (*lisān nāṭiq bi-al-Qur'ān*).[505]

Then al-Tustarī concludes that *ḥikmah* means consensus/combining of the sciences (*ijmā' al-'ulūm*) and its origin is *sunnah* as it occurs in verse 33:34. In this context, he makes reference to the basic meaning of the root *ḥ-k-m* in the sense of *mana'a* "to restrain or prevent" as expressed in the Arabic expression, "You restrained (*ḥakamta*) the man".[506] Al-Tustarī asserts that a person would use this expression when he has prevented

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[499] Al-Tustarī, 42. For the same *ḥadīth*, see also al-Sulamī, *Ziyādāt*, 20.

[500] Al-Tustarī, 42.

[501] Ibid., 42

[502] Ibid., 43.

[503] Ibid., 43.

[504] Ibid., 43.

[505] Ibid., 43.

[506] Ibid., 43; al-Sulamī, *Ziyādāt*, 20.

(*mana'a*) another person from harmful things (*ḍarar*) and/or deviation from the truth (*khurūj 'an al-ḥaqq*).[507] In al-Tustarī's view, this sense is apparent in verses 54:5 (*ḥikmah bālighah*) and 21:74 (*wa- ātaynāhu ḥukman*). He concludes that God gives new life to dead hearts through *ḥikam*, just as a downpour gives life to a dead land.[508]

Al-Tustarī asserts that the capital (*ra's māl*) of *ḥikmah* is of three kinds as follows,

> The first one is training the soul/self (*nafs*) regarding reprehensible things (*makrūhāt*); the second is emptying the heart of the love of carnal desires (*shahawāt*); and the third is watching over the heart with respect to safeguarding incoming thoughts (*khaṭirāt*), as whoever is mindful of God when incoming thoughts pour into his heart, God protects him at the times when his limbs move to action (*'inda ḥarakāti jawāriḥihī*).[509]

Apparently, similar to his scholarly predecessors in mystical writings, al-Tustarī places great emphasis on the practical and experiential aspects of Sufi terms. We can observe this fact in his exposition of belief (*īmān*) when he says,

> Certainty (*yaqīn*), patience (*ṣabr*) and sincerity (*ikhlāṣ*) are the heart (*qalb*), pillar (*'imād*) and perfection (*kamāl*) of belief, respectively; for a servant reaches confirmation/certification (*taṣdīq*), realization/verification (*taḥqīq*), and the T/truth (*al-ḥaqq*) through *ikhlāṣ*, *taṣdīq*, and *taḥqīq*, correspondingly. *Ikhlāṣ* is the fruit/result (*thamarah*) of *yaqīn* because *yaqīn* means witnessing of the secret (*mushāhadat al-sirr*). Whoever has not experienced witnessing of the secret with his Lord, his practice has not become dedicated to God sincerely, though God knows best.[510]

3. Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 386/996)

One of the most explicit elucidations of the Qur'anic concept of *ḥikmah* as understood by early Sufi writers is introduced by al-Makkī. Throughout his works *Qūt al-qulūb* and *'Ilm al-qulūb*, al-Makkī provides noteworthy exegetical information about

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[507] Al-Tustarī, 43.

[508] Ibid., 43.

[509] Ibid., 43.

[510] Ibid., 52.

ḥikmah. *'Ilm al-qulūb* deserves special treatment in this regard.[511] In his expositions on the essence of *ḥikmah*, the greatness of its value, those who deserve it and its dignity, al-Makkī goes into a detailed analysis of verse 2:269. He says that God gave prophethood to distinguished individuals among the people of purity and sealed/completed (*khatama*) the institution of prophethood and closed its door with the Prophet Muḥammad. As for *ḥikmah* alone, God had given it to Luqmān and since then He has kept its door unreservedly open until the day of resurrection. Al-Makkī asserts that *ḥikmah* is one of the ten great Divine blessings given to mankind. He also describes the way these should be sought.[512] Al-Makkī lists the ten blessings as follows: a) *ḥikmah* given to the *ḥukamā'* as mentioned in 2:269,[513] which should be sought through hunger (*jū'*) and thirst (*ẓama'*);

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[511] Although bibliographical works attribute a work titled *'Ilm al-qulūb* to al-Makkī (see for instance, Sezgin, I: 667), the editor of the presently available work, Ḥamzah, raises some doubts regarding the authenticity of this book. In his view, there is no doubt that al-Makkī wrote the original *'Ilm al-qulūb*, but the content of the current manuscript, on the basis of which he edited and published the work, includes certain anachronistic accounts which cannot be al-Makkī's own statements. The editor believes that the original version of the book was shorter and in the course of time it has been expanded through reproductions and expositions. Editor's introduction to al-Makkī, *'Ilm al-qulūb*, eds. 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Daqr and Muṣṭafā Ibrāhīm Ḥamzah (Damascus, 1998): 16-17. I agree with Ḥamzah on his basic argument. Throughout my own reading of the book, I have also observed additional reasons leading me to think that the extant version of *'Ilm al-qulūb* may not be the original work untouched by later elucidators. This situation can, for instance, be seen in al-Makkī's expositions on verse 2:269, to which I will refer in the following lines. Al-Makkī introduces a highly elaborate explanation of *ḥikmah* in this verse to such an extent that none of the earliest commentators that I have mentioned in my previous chapter present such detailed exposition. It is only in later *tafsīr* writers, such as al-Qurṭubī and al-Suyūṭī, one can find such a categorically explicit definition of *ḥikmah*. Therefore, I think that the original version of *'Ilm al-qulūb* did not contain a treatment of *ḥikmah* at this length, but over time the work has been expanded through later reproductions. As a side point, it might be interesting to note that according to the extant version of this work, al-Makkī attributes the following oft-quoted statement, "Whoever knows himself knows his Lord (*man 'arafa nafsahu fa-qad 'arafa rabbahu*)," to 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, instead of to the Prophet himself, which is the case with many other Sufi writers. Al-Makkī, *'Ilm*, 98.

[512] Al-Makkī, *'Ilm*, 19-21.

[513] "He (God) gives *ḥikmah* to whomever He wills." Al-Makkī further elucidates this verse citing traditional *tafsīr* materials on the authority of the earliest commentators. Actually al-Makkī lists fourteen aspects (*wajh*) of *ḥikmah* in the following order: 1) *Ḥikmah* means knowledge of the Qur'an regarding its abrogating (*nāsikh*) and abrogated (*mansūkh*) verses, its clearly (*muḥkam*) and not clearly (*mutashābih*) intelligible passages, its earlier (*muqaddam*) and later (*mu'akhkhar*) revealed verses, its passages pertaining to the lawful (*ḥalāl*) and unlawful (*ḥarām*), and its similitudes (*amthāl*). This explanation was introduced by Ibn 'Abbās (27). 2) *Ḥikmah* denotes prophethood (*nubuwwah*) as al-Suddī said (27). 3) *Ḥikmah* means perspicacity (*fīrāsah*) which is defined by some *ḥukamā'* as correctness in opinions/assumptions (*ẓunūn*)

b) mercy (*raḥmah*) as found in 2:105,[514] which should be requested through imploring (*taḍarru'*) and weeping (*bukā'*); c) kingdom/sovereignty (*mulk*), as in 2:247,[515] which should be sought through humbleness (*tawāḍu'*) and modesty (*ḥayā'*); d) wealth (*ghinā*),

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and knowledge of future-lying things (*ma'rifatu mā-lam yakun bi-mā kāna*) on the basis of what has already transpired. *Firāsah* is further defined as perception of an upright person who possesses the light of God-fearingness/God-consciousness (*tuqā*) and faith (*īmān*). Such a heavenly gift is given only to truthful (*ṣidq*) and pious people (27-29). 4) *Ḥikmah* means intellect (*'aql*) as can also be testified in verses 19:12 and 31:12 (30-31). 5) *Ḥikmah* refers to fear of God (*khashyah*) as it is explained further in 35:28 (31-32). 6) *Ḥikmah* denotes comprehension (*fiqh*) in interpreting the Qur'an (33). 7) *Ḥikmah* means knowledge (*'ilm*) (34-35). In this context, al-Makkī cites al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad's categorization of human beings into four kinds: a) a person who knows (*yadrī*) and who knows that he knows; such a person is a scholar (*'ālim*), so he should be followed; b) a person who knows but who does not know that he knows; such a person is as if he were sleeping (*nā'im*), so he should be awakened; c) a person who does not know and who knows that he does not know; such a person is a learner (*muta'allim*), so he should be taught; d) a person who does not know, but who does not know that he does not know; such a person is ignorant (*jāhil*), so people should stay away from him (35-36). 8) *Ḥikmah* denotes correctness in speech; when a *ḥakīm* speaks, he speaks through/by God (*bi-Allāh*) and when he is silent, he is silent with God (*ma'a Allāh*). In this respect there is a relationship between speaking and remaining silent in opposite directions, as the more a person speaks the less his correctness, while the less such a person speaks the greater his correctness becomes (36-37). 9) *Ḥikmah* refers to *aḥādīth* of the Prophet or his *Sunnah* which explains the Qur'anic directives (37-38). 10) *Ḥikmah* means correctness in speech, action and will (*irādah*); accordingly a *ḥakīm* would speak only for God, act only for His sake, and will only that which God wills (40). 11) *Ḥikmah* refers to three things: modesty (*ḥayā'*), safeguarding (*ḥifẓ*) the sanctity of the Prophet, and observing (*ri'āyah*) the rights of family and neighbor (40). 12) *Ḥikmah* denotes moral scrupulousness (*wara'*). Al-Makkī cites Abū Yazīd al-Biṣṭāmī's (d. *ca.* 261/875) exemplary practice of *wara'* in this regard. According to this account, al-Biṣṭāmī was one day washing his garment and wanted to dry it under the sun. First he put it on someone's wall, but then thought it impermissible for him to put it there without the owner's permission. Second he put the garment on the wall of the mosque, but again thought that this would not be in keeping with the original function for which the mosque was built. Third he grabbed the garment with his hands and stood still under the sun, but even then thought that he was casting a shadow over people. Finally he went to the desert and dried it there. It is also recorded that Biṣṭāmī said that he did never used to strike the surface of water with his hand, because he thought that water was created for fulfilling the obedience of God and that he was not supposed to harm it. Similarly, when he saw an herb or plant, he would consider that it was given to praising God and that it never committed sin; how then could a sinner like himself prevent it from doing so? (40-41). 13) *Ḥikmah* means learning the Qur'an by heart (*ḥafiẓa al-qur'āna 'an-ẓahri al-qalb*). Al-Makkī cites the following explanation of Ibn 'Abbās in this regard, "Whoever recites the Qur'an before receiving formal education, he is among those who are given *ḥikmah* while they are yet at young age" (41). Apparently here Ibn 'Abbās is referring to verse 19:12 which says that God gave *ḥukm* to John the Baptist while he was yet a little child. 14) *Ḥikmah* denotes understanding the refined expressions (*laṭā'if*) of the Qur'an and aspects/levels of its meanings (*wujūh ma'ānīhī*), as it is reported from 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, "If I wanted to overload seventy camels with the interpretation of the *Fātiḥah*, I could do so." Al-Makkī also reports that every Qur'anic verse has seven meanings (*ma'ānin*): a) external/exoteric (*ẓāhir*) for the common people (*'awāmm*); b) internal/esoteric (*bāṭin*) for the elect (*khawāṣṣ*); c) allegorical (*ishārāt*) for the elect of the elect; d) indicative/symbolic (*amārāt*) for the friends of God/saints (*awliyā'*); e) refined (*laṭā'if*) for the very truthful (*ṣiddīqūn*); f) delicate/subtle (*daqā'iq*) for the lovers (*muḥibbūn*); and g) real (*ḥaqā'iq*) for the prophets (*nabiyyūn*). Al-Makkī, *'Ilm*, 27-42.

[514] "He (God) singles out (*yakhtaṣṣu*) for His mercy whomever He wills."

[515] "God gives his kingdom/sovereignty to whomever He wills."

as in 9:28,[516] which should be requested through thankfulness (*shukr*) and contentment (*riḍā*); e) response (*ijābah*), as in 6:41,[517] which should be sought through continuing vigilance (*dawām al-tabṣīṣ*); f) repentance (*tawbah*), as in 9:27,[518] which should be requested through obedience (*ṭā'ah*), imploring (*taḍarru'*) and invocation (*du'ā'*); g) sustenance (*rizq*), as in 2:212,[519] which should be sought through obedience and God-fearingness/God-consciousness (*tuqā*); h) forgiveness (*maghfirah*), as in 48:14,[520] which should be requested through fear (*khawf*) and hope (*rajā'*); i) guidance (*hidāyah*), as in 2:142,[521] which should be sought through safeguarding/observance (*ḥifẓ*) and faithfulness (*wafā'*); and j) the raising of [spiritual] states/degrees (*raf' al-darajāt*) and the granting of miracles (*i'ṭā' al-karāmāt*) as in 6:83.[522] (Al-Makkī does not mention the way this last blessing should be sought.)[523]

In his exposition of the Qur'anic verse 16:43 ("Ask the people of remembrance [*ahl al-dhikr*] if you do not know"), al-Makkī introduces further arguments relating to *ḥikmah*. He asserts that *ahl al-dhikr* are those who remember God and that they are the people of the declaration of God's unity (*ahl al-tawḥīd*) and of intellect (*'aql*) regarding

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[516] "If you fear poverty, God will surely enrich you of His bounty."

[517] "He will remove that on account of which you invoked Him, if He wills."

[518] "Then God accepts repentance after that from whomever He wills."

[519] "God gives sustenance/provision to whomever He wills without reckoning."

[520] "He (God) forgives whomever He wills."

[521] "He (God) guides whomever He wills to a straight path."

[522] "We raise up in degrees whomever We will."

[523] Al-Makkī, *'Ilm*, 19-21. In his *Qūt al-qulūb*, al-Makkī introduces a much shorter explanation of the word *ḥikmah* in the same verse. Here, he simply reports that *ḥikmah* means understanding (*fahm*) and perspicacity (*fiṭnah*). Al-Makkī, *Qūt* I: 305.

God. These people do not receive/obtain this knowledge through the conventional ways of studying books or instructing each other. Rather, they are the people of practice/action (*ahl 'amal*) and of good conduct (*ḥusn mu'āmalāt*); they have an intimate and special relationship with God, Who gives them *ḥikmah* in their purified and sincere hearts as a result of their esoteric practices (*li-a'mālihim al-bāṭinah*). Al-Makkī concludes that such people possess genuine and true knowledge of religious matters, including knowledge of *ḥikmah*.[524]

On another occasion, al-Makkī talks about the concept of *ḥikmah* in relation to the notion of *'ilm*. On the authority of earlier scholars, al-Makkī defines *'ilm* as a light (*nūr*) placed by God in the hearts of His friends (*awliyā'*). This light leads to an expansion of knowledge in the heart. Such people would see things with certainty (*yaqīn*) and speak with true clarity, which is the *ḥikmah* that God places in the hearts of His friends, as mentioned in the Qur'an (38:20): "And We gave him (David) *ḥikmah* and decisive speech." According to al-Makkī's report, Muslim authorities defined *ḥikmah* in this verse as correctness in speech as well.[525]

4. Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī (d. 412/1021)

Al-Sulamī's *Ḥaqā'iq al-tafsīr* holds a unique authoritative scholarly position in the studies on early Sufi commentary. Given the fact that the majority of written materials of this kind that shed light on the formative period of the Sufi exegetical tradition are lost, the *Ḥaqā'iq* offers a particularly important and rich collection of mystic

[524] Ibid., I: 278.

[525] Ibid., I: 305.

Qur'anic interpretations by the earliest authorities. In this regard, its influence on later Sufi Qur'an commentaries may be comparable to the influence that al-Ṭabarī's *Jāmi' al-bayān* exercised on the subsequent mainstream traditional exegesis of the Qur'an. Al-Sulamī's *tafsīr* documents the initial development of many mystical concepts and their Qur'anic references elucidated by the earliest Sufi figures.[526]

For a long time the *Ḥaqā'iq* awaited publication as a whole, although fragments of it had been published by Massignon[527] and Nwyia.[528] In addition to his work on this *tafsīr*,[529] Böwering has edited and published al-Sulamī's *Ziyādāt al-ḥaqā'iq*. In addition, Ateş wrote his subsequently published doctoral thesis on al-Sulamī and his Sufi *tafsīr*, in which he presents and discusses examples of al-Sulamī's interpretations.[530] Researchers had to wait, however, until 2001 to have an edited edition of the *Ḥaqā'iq* completed by Sayyid 'Umrān.[531] Unfortunately, this edition does not seem to be a truly critical scholarly edition. While it is not easy to determine whether as a result of misreadings by the editor or of misprinting, it is clear that there are serious mistakes in this edition.[532]

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[526] For a general outline of al-Sulamī's *Ḥaqā'iq* and its position within Sufi Qur'an commentary, see Ateş, *Sülemī*; Ateş, *İşārī*, 91-95; Böwering, "The Qur'an," 41-56. At the same time, I should mention that a number of leading Muslim scholarly authorities, including Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1200) and Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728/1328), severely criticized al-Sulamī and his *tafsīr* on the basis of al-Sulamī's interpretations regarding *al-ḥurūf al-muqaṭṭa'ah* and alleged anthropomorphism. They further accused him of using unsound *aḥādīth* and even of forgery. Ateş, *Sülemī*, 40-43; Ateş, *İşārī*, 92-95.

[527] Massignon, *Essai*, 359-412.

[528] Nwyia, "Le Tafsīr," 181-230.

[529] Böwering, "The Qur'an".

[530] Ateş, *Sülemī*.

[531] Al-Sulamī *Ḥaqā'iq*.

[532] By way of example, I quote a part from al-Sulamī's own introduction to the *tafsīr*. I spent long painful hours trying to make sense out of this section such as it is written in the edition, though in the end, I was not able to. At the same time, I was lucky that the editor has put a few exemplary pages of the manuscripts in his introduction to the book. Finally, I decided to follow the editor's reading of the text together with

Despite its shortcomings, I will still make use of this edition, albeit with as much caution as possible.

Throughout his *tafsīr*, al-Sulamī functions as a compiler of previous Sufi expositions and anecdotes together with their chains of transmission. In most cases, he does not offer his own statements. In the introduction, al-Sulamī talks about his motives for compiling this *tafsīr*. Despite the fact that, as he asserts, he has seen many intellectual writings by scholars of the "exoteric sciences (*al-'ulūm al-ẓawāhir*)" who have industriously presented works on the various aspects of the Qur'anic text (legal, syntactical, philological, etc.), he could not find any complete interpretation of Qur'anic statements as understood by the "people of reality (*ahl al-ḥaqīqah*)", with the exception of some scattered and unarranged elucidations by Ibn 'Aṭā' (d. 309/921) and Ja'far al-Ṣādiq. Seeing such a gap in Muslim scholarship, al-Sulamī took this duty upon himself.[533] On the authority of the Prophet, al-Sulamī reports that for each Qur'anic verse there are four gradational meanings: "an outward or exoteric (*ẓāhir*), an inward or esoteric (*bāṭin*), a limit (*ḥadd*) and an anagogical or stational (*maṭṭala'*) sense."[534] As

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those pages of the manuscripts. After a traditional *ḥamdalah* (thanking of God) and *ṣalwalah* (sending prayers upon the Prophet), according to 'Umrān's reading, al-Sulamī says, "*wa-lammā dānat al-mutawassimīn bi-al-'ulūm al-ẓawāhir ṣannafū fī anwā' al-qur'ān...*" (19). The verb *dānat* did not make any sense here to me in this form. I thought that it might be *dawwana* (the second verbal form of the root *d-w-n*) in the sense of "to write or put down in writing". When I examined carefully the written form of this word in the manuscript, however, I saw that *dawwana* could not be a reasonable solution. Then I realized that the word had to be read as *ra'aytu* (I saw/have seen), which looks graphically very much like *dānat*. In that case I was able to make sense out of this passage and translate it as, "I have seen examiners of the external sciences compile [works] on various aspects of the Qur'an..."
In another place al-Sulamī talks about the gradational meanings of the Qur'anic verses as *'ibārah, ishārah, laṭā'if*, and *ḥaqā'iq*. I do not know whether it is a mistake made by the editor or the publisher, but instead of the word *'ibārah* we find there the word *'ibādah* (act of worship), both of which, once again look very similar graphically. Al-Sulamī, *Ḥaqā'iq* I: 23.

[533] Ibid., I: 19-20.

[534] Ibid., I: 21.

noted above, al-Sulamī refers also to Ja'far's interpretation of the Qur'an on the basis of a four-dimensional approach: verbal expression (*'ibārah*), which addresses the common people (*'awāmm*); allusion or allegorical expression (*ishārah*) that speaks to the elect (*khawāṣṣ*); refined expressions (*laṭā'if*) addressed to the friends (*awliyā'*) of God; and realities (*ḥaqā'iq*), which are for the prophets (*anbiyā'*).[535] Al-Sulamī relates a similar categorization narrated from 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, which adds to the definitions of the Prophet and Ja'far by noting that, *'ibārah*, *ishārah*, *laṭā'if* and *ḥaqā'iq* speak to hearing (*sam'*), intellect (*'aql*), witnessing (*mushāhadah*) and self-submission (*istislām*), respectively.[536]

As far as his expositions with respect to *ḥikmah* are concerned, al-Sulamī lists various definitions of this word that occurs in verse 2:269 as follows: a) God-given knowledge (*'ilm ladunnī*), b) allusion for which there is no apparent cause (*ishārah lā 'illata fī-hā*), c) calling the Real as a witness in all states/circumstances (*ishhād al-ḥaqq 'alā jamī' al-aḥwāl*), d) disengaging mystery so that inspiration would come (*tajrīdu al-sirr li-wurūd al-ilhām*),[537] e) the distinguishing light between inspiration and devilish insinuations (*al-nūr al-mufarriq bayn al-ilhām wa-al-waswās*), f) prophethood

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[535] Ibid., I: 22.

[536] Ibid., I: 22-23. The word *sam'* in this context may well refer to the transmitted texts of the Qur'an and *Sunnah* as opposed to *'aql* as it occurs in pairing expressions of *sam'* versus *'aql* or *naql* versus *'aql*.

[537] This sentence does not make clear sense. There must be an editorial mistake here. In his work on al-Sulamī and his *tafsīr*, Ateş gives examples of al-Sulamī's interpretations of Qur'anic verses and, fortunately, he cites this verse as well. According to Ateş' reading, this passage defines *ḥikmah* as, "emptying the soul/spirit of everyting other than God so that inspiration would come in (*Hikmet, ilhāmın gelmesi için rūhu māsivadan boşaltmaktır*)". Ateş, *Sülemī*, 146.

(*nubuwwah*), and g) a good deed (*ḥasanah*).[538] Al-Sulamī reports another explanation of *ḥikmah* on a more spiritual plane when he relates,

> Indeed God sent the Messengers with good counsel (*bi-al-nuṣḥ*) to the souls of His creation (*li-anfus khalqihi*); He sent down the Book to awaken their hearts (*li-tanbīh qulūbihim*); and He sent *ḥikmah* to make their souls tranquil (*li-sukūn arwāḥihim*). Thus, the Messenger and the Book call to His command (*amrihi*), and to His judgments (*aḥkāmihi*), respectively; and *ḥikmah* indicates (*mushīrah*) His grace (*faḍlihi*).[539]

It is said that *ḥikmah* in this verse (2:269) means "understanding of the Book of God" and that whoever is given understanding of the Book of God has been given a mighty gift with respect to coming close to Him.[540] Al-Sulamī also quotes al-Junayd's elucidation of *ḥikmah* as, "God gives new life to peoples/nations (*aqwām*) by/through *ḥikmah* and He praises them for it."[541]

We find further practical elucidation of *ḥikmah* in al-Sulamī's *Ziyādat al-tafsīr* where he reports that some scholars defined *ḥikmah* in verse 2:269 as "correctness in speech together with rightness of action in sincerity."[542] When they were asked about the time when *ḥikmah* started having influence on them, some authorities replied that this

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[538] Al-Sulamī, *Ḥaqā'iq* I: 79-80. In the case of another verse (38:20) stating that David was given *ḥikmah*, al-Sulamī cites a number of interpretations of *ḥikmah* presented by earlier authorities as follows: a) David's knowledge of himself and his people; b) knowledge (*'ilm*) and understanding (*fahm*) in general; c) correctness in speech, soundness in belief, and being steadfast in affairs. Al-Sulamī, *Ḥaqā'iq* II: 184. For similar interpretations of the same verse, see al-Qushayrī, *Laṭā'if al-ishārāt*, ed. Ibrāhīm Basyūnī (Egypt, 1981) III: 249. In another Qur'anic instance (54:5), al-Sulamī interprets *ḥikmah bālighah* as the ultimate and perfect knowledge. Al-Sulamī, *Ḥaqā'iq* II: 290. Al-Qushayrī, on the other hand, asserts that this *ḥikmah bālighah* is true, clear and open to those who reflect on it. Al-Qushayrī, *Laṭā'if* III: 494.

[539] Al-Sulamī, *Ḥaqā'iq* I: 80.

[540] Ibid., I: 80.

[541] Ibid., I: 80. In his *tafsīr*, al-Tha'labī basically follows al-Sulamī's reports regarding this verse (2:269). Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Tha'labī, *al-Kashf wa-al-bayān*, ed. Abū Muḥammad b. 'Āshūr and Naẓīr al-Sā'idī (Beirut, 2002) II: 271-272.

[542] Al-Sulamī, *Ziyādāt*, 20. In the context of verse 31:12, al-Sulamī relates a similar interpretation of *ḥikmah* when he notes that it means the knowledge of words, states and acts. In the exemplary case of Luqmān, he would assume this notion as an admonition for himself and introduce it to his companions as well. Ibid., 124.

happened once they had humbled their souls/selves (*nafs*). Ma'rūf al-Karkhī (d. *ca.* 200/816), for instance, says, "Whoever does his practice well, *ḥikmah* is sent down to his heart."[543] Al-Sulamī mentions some other experts who said that *ḥikmah* is the treasure of God (*kanz Allāh*) and that the *ḥukamā'* are the household managers of God (*qahārimat Allāh*). God has commanded them to bestow His treasure on His servants.[544] Abū Bakr al-Warrāq (d. 280/893) said that there is no [further] neediness (*fāqah*) with *ḥikmah*, as the Qur'an declares, "Whoever is given *ḥikmah* has been given much good."[545]

On a more intellectual plane, al-Sulamī reports another interpretation of *ḥikmah* in verse 2:269 as "the light of perspicacity" (*nūr al-fiṭnah*).[546] He narrates a similar exposition when he cites from earlier authorities, "*ḥikmah* is four things: knowledge (*'ilm*), forbearance (*ḥilm*), intellect (*'aql*) and gnosis (*ma'rifah*)."[547] Al-Sulamī elucidates *ḥikmah* within a network of these concepts, particularly of *ma'rifah* and *'ilm*. He explains the notion of *ma'rifah*, underlining that the first thing that God prescribed to His servants was *ma'rifah*, as occurs in verse 51:56, "And I have not created the jinn and mankind except to worship Me (*li-ya'budūni*)." Al-Sulamī refers to Ibn 'Abbās'

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[543] Ibid., 20. On the authority of earlier scholars, al-Sulamī mentions a related exposition when he defines *ḥikmah* in verse 31:12 as "knowledge of the danger[ous aspects] of the self/soul (*gharar al-nafs*) and their treatment." Ibid., 124.

[544] Ibid., 20.

[545] Ibid., 21. According to al-Qushayrī's narration, once a man saw a *ḥakīm* eating the leaves of vegetables fallen on the surface of the water. The man said, "If you were to serve the king (*sulṭān*), you would not need to eat this." The *ḥakīm* replied, "And you, if you were content (*law qani'ta*) with this, you would not need to serve the king." Al-Qushayrī, *al-Risalāh*, 82.

[546] Al-Sulamī, *Ziyādāt*, 20.

[547] Ibid. 21.

definition of the expression *li-ya'budūni* in this verse as *li-ya'rifūni* (in order to know Me).[548]

According to al-Sulamī's terminology, *ma'rifah* is the highest epistemological concept. Ultimately *ma'rifah* is beyond any merely human function and capacity even in the case of the Prophet who, when he was asked, "By means of what (*bi-mādhā*) have you known (*'arafta*) God?", replied, "Indeed, I do not know (*lā a'rifu*) my Lord with anything; rather I have known (*'araftu*) things with/through Him."[549] Likewise, the first caliph Abū Bakr is reported to have said that only those on whom God bestows knowledge of Himself can know Him.[550] Al-Sulamī quotes another definition by Yūsuf b. al-Ḥusayn al-Rāzī (d. 304/916) of *ma'rifah* simply as the "mercy of God (*raḥmat Allāh*)." The latter understanding of *ma'rifah* is grounded in verse 2:105, "God singles out (*yakhtaṣṣu*) for His mercy whom He wills." When Yūsuf was further asked about how a servant could know his Lord he said,

> As the servant is incapable of knowing himself, how could it happen that he should know his Lord? Those who have knowledge of their Lord acquire this knowledge through Himself.[551]

In al-Sulamī's understanding, *ma'rifah* is a gift (*mawhibah*) from God by means of which He illuminates the hearts of His gnostic servants. The outward sign of this gift is a

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[548] Al-Sulamī, *Muqaddimah fī al-taṣawwuf*, ed. Yusuf Zaydān (Beirut, 1999): 30; al-Sulamī, *Tis'at kutub fī uṣūl al-taṣawwuf wa-al-zuhd*, ed. Süleyman Ateş (Beirut, 1993): 306. For the same account, see al-Qushayrī, *al-Risalāh*, 4.

[549] Al-Sulamī, *Muqaddimah*, 30; al-Sulamī, *Tis'at kutub*, 306-307. The same statement is also attributed to other eminent Sufi figures, including al-Junayd and Dhū al-Nūn. Al-Junayd is mentioned as saying, "I have known my Lord through my Lord; otherwise I could not have known Him." Al-Sulamī, *Muqaddimah*, 31. Dhū al-Nūn, in his explanation of the knowledge of *tawḥīd*, said, when he was asked with what he knew (*'arafa*) his Lord, "My Lord is more exalted than everything with which He could be known, rather, I have come to know (*'araftu*) my Lord through my Lord and I have come to know everything other than my Lord through my Lord." Al-Makkī, *'Ilm*, 105.

[550] Al-Sulamī, *Muqaddimah*, 30; al-Sulamī, *Tis'at kutub*, 307.

[551] Al-Sulamī, *Muqaddimah*, 30-31.

constant devotedness to God through worship on the part of the servants. *Ma'rifah* is the knowledge of God (*al-'ilm bi-Allāh*), His names and His attributes to the greatest possible degree. If a gnostic attains such knowledge, he proceeds from his witnessing of *ma'rifah* to become absorbed within the witnessing of the Known (*al-ma'rūf*).[552]

As it appears in al-Sulamī's writings, some earlier authorities state that there are three signs of a gnostic (*'ārif*): "His tongue speaks by way of (*bi*) *ḥikmah*; his heart is faithful by (*bi*) *ma'rifah*; and his body is in accord with the Divine ordinance."[553] *Ma'rifah* thus should ultimately be sought in the heart.[554] As far as *ma'rifah* itself is concerned, al-Sulamī states that it is of three kinds: the tongue's *ma'rifah* (*ma'rifat al-lisān*), which is verbal affirmation (*iqrār*); the heart's *ma'rifah* (*ma'rifat qalb*), which is confirmation (*taṣdīq*); and soul's or spirit's *ma'rifah* (*ma'rifat rūḥ*), which is certainty (*yaqīn*).[555] In the course of the spiritual epistemological journey, there is a mutual inextricable relationship between *ma'rifah* and *'ilm*. Neither of them can produce reliable knowledge without the other, nor is there any crystal-clear borderline between the two.[556]

Al-Sulamī provides further elucidations on the various gradational functions of *ḥikmah* depending on the level of its possessor. In this regard he cites the following saying by Manṣūr b. 'Ammār (d. *ca.* 225/839),

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[552] Al-Sulamī, *Tis'at kutub*, 176-177.

[553] Al-Sulamī, *Muqaddimah*, 32.

[554] Ibid., 32. In a similar way, Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Nūrī says that the guide to God is God Himself. When he was asked about his opinion regarding reason/intellect (*'aql*), he asserted, "Reason/intellect is an incapable thing and it can guide only to things incapable like itself." Ibid., 32.

[555] Ibid., 31.

[556] Ibid., 32.

> Indeed *ḥikmah* speaks in the hearts of gnostics (*'ārifūn*), ascetics (*zāhidūn*), worshippers (*'ubbād*), disciples on the spiritual path or desiring ones (*murīdūn*), and men of knowledge (*'ulamā'*) through the tongue of attestation (*taṣdīq*), preference (*tafḍīl*), success (*tawfīq*), reflection (*tafakkur*) and remembrance (*tadhakkur*), respectively.[557]

According to al-Sulamī's mystical system, *ḥikmah* is an indispensable part of spiritual enlightenment. Relying on previous Sufi masters, he narrates,

> Through good manners (*adab*) one [can] understand knowledge (*'ilm*); through knowledge one performs religious practice (*'amal*) properly; through practice one reaches *ḥikmah*; through *ḥikmah* one understands and achieves asceticism (*zuhd*); through asceticism one renounces (*tatruk*) this world; through renouncing this world one desires (*targhab bi*) the other world; and through desiring the other world one reaches the contentment (*riḍā*) of God.[558]

Al-Sulamī interprets *ḥikmah* in verse 16:125 as an intellectual notion and quotes a saying of the Prophet, "We, the community of the Prophets, have been ordered to speak to people in proportion to their intellects (*'alā qadri 'uqūlihim*)."[559] At the same time, al-Sulamī elucidates *ḥikmah* here as a practical concept when he, on the authority of previous scholars, explains the reason why the word *ḥikmah* in this verse comes before *al-maw'iẓah al-ḥasanah* (goodly admonition). Al-Sulamī relates that this is because *ḥikmah* means correctness in speech by the tongue (*bi-al-lisān*), in thought by the heart (*janān*) and in action through one's deeds (*arkān*).[560] He further reports a supplementary definition of *ḥikmah* in this verse as,

> No one would become *ḥakīm* until he becomes *ḥakīm* in his acts (*af'āl*), words (*aqwāl*) and states (*aḥwālihi*). Otherwise such a person would be described as speaking (*nāṭiq*) through/by *ḥikmah*, but not as being a *ḥakīm*.[561]

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[557] Al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣūfiyyah*, ed. Nūr al-Dīn Sharībah (Cairo, 1969): 135.

[558] Ibid., 189.

[559] Al-Sulamī, *Ḥaqā'iq* I: 377.

[560] Ibid., I: 378.

[561] Ibid., I: 378. Al-Sulamī repeats this definition of *ḥikmah* with a little change for another Qur'anic instance where *ḥikmah* is mentioned in relation to Luqmān (31:12). According to the report, "No one can become *ḥakīm* until he becomes *ḥakīm* in his speech, acts, social relations (*fī mu'āsharatihi*) and companionship (*fī suḥbatihi*). Otherwise such a person would be described as speaking through/by *ḥikmah*, but not as actually being *ḥakīm*. Ibid., II: 129.

In al-Sulamī's view, *ḥikmah* is a lofty spiritual epistemological concept to such a degree that its horizon comes very close to prophethood. On the authority of Abū Bakr al-Warrāq, al-Sulamī reports,

> The *ḥukamā'* are the successor[s] (*khalaf*) of the prophets. There is no prophethood anymore, but there is *ḥikmah*, which means perfecting things/matters (*iḥkām al-umūr*). One of the first signs of *ḥikmah* is long silence (*ṭūl al-ṣamt*) and talking [only] when it is necessary.[562]

In his treatment of the word *ḥukm* in verse 19:12, al-Sulamī mentions a number of definitions including gnosis (*ma'rifah*) and hitting upon the truth in speech, acts and states.[563] Apparently, in his understanding, the meanings of the words *ḥukm* and *ḥikmah* in such Qur'anic contexts are basically the same. Al-Sulamī relates that the meaning of *ḥukm* here in relation to John the Baptist refers to the latter's innate familiarity with this notion, as his soul/spirit (*rūḥ*) and self (*nafs*) were pasted (*ma'jūn*) with the lights of witnessing (*bi-anwār al-mushāhadah*) and the refinements of servanthood/worship and striving (*bi-ādāb al-'ubūdiyyah wa-al-mujāhadah*), respectively.[564] In addition, al-Sulamī quotes another definition of *ḥukm* indicating John the Baptist's privileged spiritual position. According to this interpretation, the statement that he was given a "*ḥukm*" refers to a judgment (*ḥukm*) given to him pertaining to the unseen (*ghayb*) as well

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[562] Al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 226. Al-Makkī relates the same saying on the authority of Abū Bakr al-Warrāq as follows, "The *ḥukamā'* are the successors (*khulafā'*) of the prophets; there is no prophethood anymore, but there is *ḥikmah*, which is explained as perfecting things/matters (*iḥkām al-umūr*)." Al-Makkī, *'Ilm*, 52. For Sufis, there is a mutually exclusive relationship between talking too much and attaining real knowledge. They argue that lengthening silence and lessening speech are of the basic requirements of a through spirituality, as can be observed in a saying of the *ḥukamā'* reported by al-Makkī which reads, "If knowledge increases, speech decreases (*idhā kathura al-'ilm qalla al-kalām*)." Al-Makkī, *Qūt* I: 294.

[563] Al-Sulamī, *Ḥaqā'iq* I: 423. See also, al-Qushayrī, *Laṭā'if* II: 422.

[564] Al-Sulamī, *Ḥaqā'iq* I: 423.

as to a truthful and reliable discernment (*firāsah ṣādiqah*) untainted by doubt or suspicion.[565]

5. Abū Isḥāq al-Tha'labī (d. 427/1035)

Another authority on Qur'an commentary in the 4th/10th and 5th/11th centuries was al-Tha'labī. In the introduction to his *tafsīr*, al-Tha'labī expresses his scholarly dissatisfaction with the contemporary works in the field of *tafsīr*. He has seen, he says, a number of commentaries focusing on either the exoteric or the esoteric type of *tafsīr* exclusively, but he has not seen a work that combines competently the two kinds of interpretations. Seeing such a scholarly need in the field, he decided to fill this gap.[566] Al-Tha'labī gives a bibliography of the scholarly sources for his *tafsīr*, *al-Kashf wa-al-bayān*. Apparently, he made use of many commentaries produced in the formative period of *tafsīr*, including by those Ibn 'Abbās, 'Ikrimah, Mujāhid, Muqātil b. Sulaymān, Ibn Jurayj, al-Thawrī, Ibn Wahb and al-Sulamī.[567] Regarding this last work, al-Tha'labī says, "I read it (*Ḥaqā'iq*) to its author al-Sulamī and he approved my reading."[568] In addition to such commentaries, al-Tha'labī makes reference to more philologically-oriented works in relation to *tafsīr* that were written by al-Farrā', al-Kisā'ī, Abū 'Ubayd al-Qāsim b. Sallām, al-Akhfash and the like.[569] What is evident from all these bibliographical references is the fact that al-Tha'labī's *al-Kashf wa-al-bayān* should be treated as a wide-

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[565] Ibid., I: 423.

[566] Al-Tha'labī, I: 73-75.

[567] Ibid., I: 75-84.

[568] Ibid., I: 83.

[569] Ibid., I: 84-85.

ranging and inclusive commentary of the Qur'an rather than as being merely a Sufi *tafsīr*. In addition to his mystical expositions, which seem to be highly influenced by al-Sulamī's *Ḥaqā'iq*, al-Tha'labī deals throughout the book with linguistic and legal matters as well.[570]

In the context of his exposition of the root *ḥ-k-m* and its derivatives, al-Tha'labī discusses the meaning of the word *ḥakīm* in verse 2:32 for which he lists two meanings. First, being the passive participle form of the root, *ḥakīm* means to be perfected/well-made; in this case, it is an attribute of the action performed. Second, being the active participle of the root, *ḥakīm* holds the same meaning as *ḥākim* and it is an attribute of the person who performs the action.[571] Similar to earlier *tafsīr* authorities, al-Tha'labī mentions that the original meaning of the word *ḥikmah* is *man'* (prevention or restraint). This prevention is a prevention from negative things and behaviors, as can be observed from the word *ḥakamah* ("bit") which is used to restrain a beast from running about wildly. So does *ḥikmah* prevent from falsehood (*bāṭil*).[572]

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[570] This inclusive character of al-Tha'labī's *tafsīr* is criticized by Ibn Taymiyyah. Even though the latter appreciates the former's merits in terms of personal religious qualities, he says nevertheless that al-Tha'labī was not very careful when compiling his *tafsīr*. In Ibn Taymiyyah's view, al-Tha'labī acted like someone who was gathering wood at night (*ḥāṭib layl*) since he wrote down everything he found in earlier books on *tafsīr*, without paying attention to the reliability of the materials. Ibn Taymiyyah, *Muqaddimah fī uṣūl al-tafsīr*, eds. 'Iṣām Fāris al-Ḥarastānī and Muḥammad Shakūr Ḥājjī Amrīr (Amman, 1997): 35. For a detailed study on al-Tha'labī's life and Qur'an commentary, see Walid A. Saleh, *The formation of the classical tafsīr tradition: the Qur'an commentary of al-Tha'labī (d. 427/1035)* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2004). Saleh argues that al-Tha'labī was not a practicing Sufi himself, but his works indicate that he was a very knowledgeable elucidator of Sufi writings and was receptive to mystical influences as well. Saleh, *The formation*, 56-65.

[571] Al-Tha'labī, I: 178.

[572] Ibid., I: 178-179. Al-Tha'labī records definitions of *ḥikmah* in another verse of the same Qur'anic chapter (2:129) by earlier authorities. He cites the following definitions which are more frequently mentioned in the context of verse 2:269: a) *Ḥikmah* means understanding the Qur'an (*fahm al-Qur'ān*), according to Mujāhid; b) It denotes admonitions found in the Qur'an regarding lawful and unlawful things (Muqātil); c) It refers to the concomitance of knowledge and practice since no one can be called *ḥakīm* unless he combines the two (Ibn Qutaybah); d) *Ḥikmah* means putting things in their original or proper places (al-Tha'labī). Al-Tha'labī also quotes Yaḥyā b. Mu'ādh's explanation saying, "*Ḥikmah* is one of

In another Qur'anic verse where *ḥikmah* is mentioned in relation to Luqmān (31:12), al-Tha'labī gives three definitions of the word: a) intellect (*'aql*), b) knowledge and practice, and c) hitting upon the truth/correctness in one's affairs (*umūr*).[573] On the authority of Ibn 'Umar, al-Tha'labī relates that the Prophet explained Luqmān's situation saying that he was not a prophet but an honest, deep-thinking man of sound opinion who loved God and was loved by Him. God thus gave him *ḥikmah*.[574]

6. 'Abd al-Karīm al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1074)

Another student of al-Sulamī, al-Qushayrī holds a distinguished position in Sufi commentary on the Qur'an. He was a prolific author to whom bibliographical writers, including al-Subkī and Ibn al-'Imād, attribute a certain *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, but this work has not survived.[575] My investigation into the following lines will be based on another *tafsīr*, *Laṭā'if al-ishārāt*, written by al-Qushayrī in accordance with the methodology of *tafsīr ishārī*. Throughout this *tafsīr*, al-Qushayrī makes copious use of his teacher's *Ḥaqā'iq*, and al-Sulamī's influence on the *Laṭā'if* with respect to the materials and ideas presented is also quite clear. Nevertheless, a few main differences between the *Ḥaqā'iq* and the *Laṭā'if* should be noted. First, al-Qushayrī eliminates the transmission chains for the narrated accounts written out in the *Ḥaqā'iq*. Second, unlike al-Sulamī, al-Qushayrī includes expositions on Qur'anic verses dealing with legal matters (*āyāt al-aḥkām*).

God's armies that He sends to the hearts of gnostics (*'ārifūn*) to give them comfort against this-worldly troubles." Ibid., I: 276-277.

[573] Ibid., VII: 312.

[574] Ibid., VII: 312.

[575] Ateş, *İşārī*, 99.

Third, al-Qushayrī treats the *basmalah* at the beginning of each surah as an independent verse and accordingly writes a specific and different commentary on it in accordance with the general spirit of the chapter that follows it.

In al-Qushayrī's epistemological terminology, there is no strictly fixed semantical application between Sufi concepts. Depending on the contextual framework, he explains terms variously and uses them interchangeably. For instance, when he explains the concept of *ma'rifah*, he refers to the Qur'anic verse 6:91, "They (the Jews) did not make a fair estimation of (*mā qadarū*) God." Reporting from earlier authorities, al-Qushayrī glosses the word *qadara* here with *'arafa*, i.e., they did not know God correctly.[576] Al-Qushayrī also cites a *ḥadīth* related by the Prophet's wife, 'Ā'ishah: "The support of a house is its base and the support of religion is intuitive knowledge of God (*al-ma'rifah bi-Allāh*), certainty (*yaqīn*) and a safeguarding intellect (*'aql qāmi'*)." When 'Ā'ishah asked about the meaning of the "safeguarding intellect", the Prophet replied, "It means refraining from disobedience to God and desiring to obey Him."[577] Similarly, in his elucidation of the relationship between the concepts of *ma'rifah* and *'ilm*, al-Qushayrī states that there is no difference in meaning between the two as long as they are used by those who possess complete knowledge of God. So far as the essence of knowledge is the same in al-Qushayrī's view, then the terms used to describe it are a secondary issue.[578]

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[576] Al-Qushayrī, *al-Risālah*, 154.

[577] Ibid., 154.

[578] Al-Qushayrī, *al-Risalāh*, 154. Likewise, an earlier authority on Sufism, Abū Sa'īd al-Kharrāz, uses the terms *ḥukamā'* and *'ulamā'* to refer to Sufis and he uses these two terms interchangeably. See, for instance, al-Kharrāz, 61, 71, 73, 93, 106, 115, 121, 142 and 75, 124, 164.

As far as al-Qushayrī's expositions regarding *ḥikmah* and other derivatives of the root *ḥ-k-m* are concerned, he also puts great emphasis on the practical aspect of these notions. When he talks about the word *ḥakīm* in 2:32 as an attribute of God, al-Qushayrī asserts that *ḥakīm* in relation to God means that everything He does is right (*ḥaqq*) and true (*ṣidq*); there is no authority higher than He; and nothing of foolishness (*safah*) and ugliness (*qubḥ*) could come from Him.[579] Similarly, in his exposition of verse 2:269, al-Qushayrī reports that *ḥikmah* here denotes correctness in [all] matters (*ṣawāb al-umūr*). He mentions that *ḥikmah* means being in agreement with God's command (*muwāfaqat amr Allāh*), while *safah* (foolishness) means being at odds with (*mukhālafah*) His command. Al-Qushayrī also relates that *ḥikmah* means witnessing the Real (*shuhūd al-ḥaqq*), while *safah* means witnessing things other than Him (*al-ghayr*).[580] Again, regarding verse16:125, al-Qushayrī records that calling to the way of God should be through urging people to obey God and preventing them from disobeying His commands. Calling through *ḥikmah* further means that one should not act in contradiction to what one commands people through one's speech.[581] Luqmān was a perfect personified example of this notion. Al-Qushayrī says that *ḥikmah* in 31:12 means correctness in/regarding reason (*'aql*), belief (*'aqd*) and speech (*nuṭq*). He reports that this *ḥikmah* denotes following the straight (spiritual) path through a success granted by God, rather

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[579] Al-Qushayrī, *Laṭā'if* I: 78. For another Qur'anic case (31:2) in which *ḥakīm* is used as a description of the Book, al-Qushayrī states that *ḥakīm* refers to the fact that the Qur'an is protected against any kind of change and/or transformation. Ibid., III: 127.

[580] Ibid., I: 207-208.

[581] Ibid., II: 329.

than through an endeavor of the self/soul (*himmat al-nafs*). Al-Qushayrī cites another definition of *ḥikmah* here as "not being under the authority of caprice (*hawā*)."[582]

Al-Qushayrī highlights the basic meaning of the root *ḥ-k-m* as "to restrain or prevent" in his interpretations. When he speaks of the word *ḥukm* in the context of 12:22, al-Qushayrī states that of the *ḥukm* that God gave to Joseph was his authority over his soul/self so that he could defeat his sexual passion (*shahwah*) and refrain from what the woman in question ('Azīz's wife) desired from him. From this example would follow that whoever does not have authority over himself, does not have authority over others either.[583]

In al-Qushari's terminology, *ḥikmah* is positioned between practical/applied (*'amalī*) and epistemological (*'ilmī*) concepts. It is treated as a central point connected inherently with *taqwā* (God-fearingness/God-consciousness), *zuhd* (asceticism), *wara'* (moral scrupulousness), *akhlāq* (good morals) and *'ibādāt* (acts of worship), on the one hand, and with *ilhām* (inspiration), *kashf* (unveiling), *ma'rifah* (gnosis), *sirr* (secret) and *haqīqah* (reality) on the other. Practical notions are starting points without which one cannot reap the epistemological fruits. In other words, it is practical notions that give birth to epistemological results. In testimony to this fundamental point, al-Qushayrī reports, "When the servant renounces (*zahada*) this world, God entrusts [him to] an angel who implants *ḥikmah* in his heart."[584] The two groups of these concepts together

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[582] Ibid., III: 130.

[583] Ibid., II: 177.

[584] Al-Qushayrī, *al-Risalāh*, 62.

constitute in an existential manner the final destinations of Muslim spirituality, which is *tawḥīd*.

As a supporter of Ash'arism, thus of Sunni Islam, al-Qushayrī states that the earlier masters of Sufism established the bases of their principles on a very firm ground with respect to *tawḥīd*. He argues that those eminent figures protected their beliefs (*'aqā'id*) from heresy (*bida'*) and followed the methodology established by the forefathers (*salaf*) of the Muslim community and by the people of the *Sunnah* (*ahl al-sunnah*), who stayed away from believing in anthropomorphism (*tashbīh*) or denying God's attributes mentioned in the Qur'an (*ta'ṭīl*), as in the context of His eternity (*qidam*) and beginninglessness (*azal*) about which al-Junayd said, "*Tawḥīd* means being able to differentiate eternity from temporal originatedness (*ḥadath*)."[585] According to al-Qushayrī's records, Ibn 'Aṭā' asserted that if anyone was exposed to a question regarding God and His attributes, he was expected to look for an answer to that question in the realm of *'ilm*, but if he could not find the answer there, he was supposed to search for it in the field of *ḥikmah*; if he still could not see an answer, he then had to analyze the question in light of *tawḥīd*. If he could not find the solution in any of these three places, he should treat the question as a wicked Satanic thought instead of a matter of knowledge in the proper sense of the word.[586] Narrating from earlier authorities, al-Qushayrī further reports that on the way to *tawḥīd*, there are three levels of epistemological consciousness:

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[585] Ibid., 3.

[586] Ibid., 25.

'aql, *ḥikmah* and *ma'rifah*, which function as proof (*dalālah*), allusion (*ishārah*) and witnessing (*shahādah*), respectively.[587]

III. *Hikmah* within the network of mystical concepts elucidated in early Sufi manuals and treatises

Moving beyond the merely reason-oriented epistemologies of Muslim theologians (*mutakallimūn*) and philosophers (*falāsifah*), the Sufis introduce other means of knowledge; they, for instance, highlight the "heart" (*qalb*), which I will discuss in detail in the following pages, as an epistemological concept. The Sufis mention various divisions of the human organs of perception and their different functions which go far beyond the limitations assigned to them by theologians and philosophers. They also talk about the various kinds of Divine support (light) these organs receive on the spiritual path. Within this general framework, however, they constantly introduce new divisions along the way in their expositions, which makes an analytic examination and categorization extremely difficult, if not impossible.

In early Sufi manuals, *ḥikmah* is treated as a theoretical and practical concept in its relation to other concepts in question. So far as its epistemological origin and function is concerned, *ḥikmah* relies strictly on religious and spiritual acts of worship. In his expositions on the Sufi sciences and states, al-Kalābādhī states that the sciences of the Sufis are the sciences of the spiritual states that can only be inherited by means of acts performed with sincerity. The first science in this regard consists of the legal prescriptions (*al-aḥkām al-shar'iyyah*) which delineate the ways in which a Muslim

[587] Ibid., 4.

should regulate his personal and social life. This first science requires as a precondition (the acquisition of) a thorough knowledge of theology (*'ilm al-tawḥīd*) as understood by the people of the *Sunnah* (*ahl al-sunnah*). If such a person receives Divine support, he is able to drive all doubts and evil thoughts out of his mind and occupies himself primarily with putting his knowledge into action. At this stage, the first thing necessary for him is the knowledge of the vices of the self/soul (*āfāt al-nafs*), its real traits, its education and its training in the acquisition of good characteristics. He must also possess the knowledge of the Enemy (*'aduww*), the temptations of this world and how to take precautions against them. And this science, according to al-Kalābādhī's terminology, is the science of *ḥikmah*, beyond which a Sufi may attain the sciences of gnosis (*ma'rifah*) and allusion (*ishārah*) to improve and perfect his knowledge.[588] I would now like to analyze and systematize further the writings of some others of the earliest elucidators of *ḥikmah* within such a context.

1. Al-Hārith al-Muḥāsibī (d. 243/857)

Al-Muḥāsibī elucidates *ḥikmah* within a network of associated epistemological and practical concepts. On the authority of al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim, al-Muḥāsibī explains the process of acquiring knowledge as follows:

> The first part (*bāb*) of knowledge (*'ilm*) is silence (*ṣamt*); the second, third and fourth parts are listening to knowledge (*istimā'uhu*), putting it into practice (*al-'amal bi-hi*) and spreading/publicizing it (*nashruhu*), respectively.[589]

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[588] Al-Kalābādhī, *Kitāb al-Ta'arruf*, ed. Aḥmad Shams al-Dīn (Beirut, 1993): 97-100.

[589] Al-Ḥārith b. Asad Al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Qaṣd wa-al-rujū' ilā Allāh*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad 'Aṭā (Cairo, 1980): 33.

In al-Muḥāsibī's view, asceticism (*zuhd*) lays the foundations of spiritual enlightenment. *Zuhd*, he says, originally resides in the hearts of the *zāhidūn* and each *zāhid* possesses an asceticism in proportion to his *ma'rifah*. Likewise, his *ma'rifah* manifests itself in proportion to his intellect (*'aql*), and his *'aql* is in proportion to his *īmān*, in succession.[590] Al-Muḥāsibī reports that *'aql* is a discerning light that God places in the heart. A person can differentiate true from false by means of *'aql* and his speech indicates the portion of this quality he enjoys. If he speaks correctly or reasonably, then people treat him as an intelligent person (*'āqil*), but if he speaks incorrectly or unreasonably, then people describe him accordingly as a foolish person (*aḥmaq*).[591] Regarding the way in which *ma'rifah* occurs (*yarid/wurūd*) in the hearts of gnostics (*'ārifūn*), al-Muḥāsibī states that there are two kinds of gnosis in the heart, abiding or stable (*sākinah*) and moving or unstable (*mutaḥarrikah*). Originally, *ma'rifah* resides in the heart by means of affirming servanthood (*'ubūdiyyah*) through the knowledge (*ma'rifah*) of declaring God's unity (*tawḥīd*). At times of excitement or commotion (*hayajān*), *ma'rifah* goes into motion, just as water flows down from its springs to its outlet until it becomes still. When the water becomes still, it becomes clear and pure. Similarly, when *ma'rifah* resides in the heart of a servant, it results in tranquility (*hudū'*), knowledge (*'ilm*) and forbearance (*ḥilm*), as well as in deliberateness/patience (*anāh*) and good opinion (*ḥusn al-ẓann*) with respect to God's promises. In this way, al-Muḥāsibī

[590] Al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Qaṣd*, 55.

[591] Ibid., 58-59.

argues, a constant God-fearingness (*khawf*), hope (*raja'*), modesty (*ḥayā'*) and similar meritorious states come to dominate the hearts of gnostics (*'ārifūn*).[592]

Al-Muḥāsibī further elucidates the method leading to *ma'rifah* by noting that acquisition of the knowledge of God becomes possible through the way in which He describes Himself, i.e., through the knowledge of the fact that He is the Forgiving (*'afuww*) and Powerful (*qadīr*), the Omnipotent (*jabbār*) and Generous (*karīm*), the Almighty (*'aẓīm*) and Forbearing/Merciful (*ḥalīm*) at the same time. There is no beginning and end to His existence. He has perfect knowledge of every minute thing and nothing escapes this all-encompassing knowledge. Al-Muḥāsibī states that if someone knows God properly, then his heart should feel desire (*raghbah*) and fear (*rahbah*) alike for Him.[593] Al-Muḥāsibī thus asserts that *ma'rifah* of God requires a very close relationship with Him. Without having settled this relationship epistemologically, experientially and practically, no one can obtain this complete knowledge of God.[594]

So far as al-Muḥāsibī's more specific exposition of the concept of *ḥikmah* is concerned, he reports that in the spiritual journey, *ḥikmah* corresponds to the state of correctness/hitting upon the truth (*iṣābat al-ṣawāb*). In this state the Truth/Real (*ḥaqq*) manifests Himself in the heart of a servant and imparts *ḥikmah* to him in his breast (*ṣadr*) and provides insights of guidance to his intellect (*'aql*) so that the servant could comprehend Him, though it would not be appropriate for the servant to describe Him

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[592] Ibid., 78.

[593] Ibid., 83-84. In another work of his, al-Muḥāsibī states that the pillars of *ma'rifah* are four: 1) *ma'rifah* of God, 2) *ma'rifah* of the enemy of God, Satan (*Iblīs*), 3) *ma'rifah* of the baser self of man that incites to evil (*al-nafs al-ammārah bi-al-sū'*), 4) *ma'rifah* of action for the sake of God. Al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-ma'rifah wa-badhl al-naṣīḥah*, ed. Ṣāliḥ Aḥmad al-Shāmī (Damascus, 1993): 29.

[594] Al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-ma'rifah*, 30-32.

with his tongue. In this context al-Muḥāsibī refers to the following Prophetic statements, "If you see a servant who is ascetic in this world, draw near to him, for he has been given *ḥikmah*;"[595] and

> If a servant becomes an ascetic in this world, he inherits three characteristics (*khiṣāl*): honor/esteem (*'izz*) without being involved in social relations, wealth (*ghinā*) without owning property, and knowledge (*'ilm*) without [formal] learning (*ta'allum*).[596]

Al-Muḥāsibī further explains why a person who has been given *ḥikmah* is not authorized to talk about what he finds and feels in his heart regarding the Truth/Real. He reports that this situation is similar to a tree that is planted and has become healthy and well-rooted in the soil; then its leaves become green and its fruits apparent. Still, this tree has not yet reached the point where its fruits are ripe enough for people to enjoy. Its fruits, therefore, should not be picked until they are completely ripe. Only then can its owner pick and profit from them. Similar is the situation of someone who is given *ḥikmah* but still needs further epistemological, experiential and practical adjustments as well as ripening in himself before speaking of this quality. Al-Muḥāsibī uses the term *muḥkam* in the sense of completed and perfected (*mutqan*) to explain this stage.[597] In this regard, al-Muḥāsibī also cites a saying which I have mentioned before as an utterance attributed to Luqmān,

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[595] Al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Qaṣd*, 88. Al-Makkī and al-Qushayrī cite the same *ḥadīth* with a small difference. In al-Makkī's variation, the same account reads, "If you see a man to whom silence (*ṣamt*) and asceticism (*zuhd*) are given, draw near to him, for he has been given *ḥikmah*." Al-Makkī, *Qūt* I: 277. Al-Qushayrī mentions this report in the context of his elucidations of the concept of *zuhd* as follows, "If you see a man who has been endowed with *zuhd* regarding this world and [the ability] to speak of it [*zuhd*] (*manṭiq*), draw near to him, for he teaches (*yulaqqin*) *ḥikmah*." Al-Qushayrī, *al-Risālah*, 60. The same *ḥadīth* is found in another work of al-Makkī's, *'Ilm al-qulūb*, but the word *manṭiq* here has a slightly different connotation. This narration reads, "If you see a man who has been given asceticism (*zuhd*) regarding this world and little speech (*qillat manṭiq*), then draw near to him, for he has been endowed with *ḥikmah*." Al-Makkī, *'Ilm*, 51. Al-Fuḍayl b. 'Iyāḍ (d. 187/802), on the other hand, underlines the mutually exclusive correlation between attaining *ḥikmah* and, at the same time, keeping close company with morally insincere people. Al-Fuḍayl phrases this point saying, "Whoever sits together with an innovator/heretic (*ṣāhib bid'ah*) is not given *ḥikmah*." Al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 10.

[596] Al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Qaṣd*, 88.

[597] Ibid., 89-90.

> O my son, keep the company of the *ḥukamā'*, for God gives new life to dead hearts through *ḥikmah* just as He gives new life to a dead land through a downpour.[598]

According to al-Muḥāsibī's explanations, silence (*ṣamt*) is the primary way to attain *ḥikmah*. If someone practices silence in a proper manner, he takes full control of his heart and his silence, reflection (*naẓar*) and speech (*kalām*) turn into contemplation (*tafakkur*), consideration (*'ibrah*) and remembrance or mindfulness (*dhikr*), respectively.[599] Silence, therefore, is an indispensable means to *ḥikmah* and no other notion can fulfill its function adequately. In the final analysis, al-Muḥāsibī's elucidations of *ḥikmah* in relation to other epistemological concepts appear to be highly existentially and practically oriented. In his view, any kind of knowledge that is merely a product of mental exercise is of very little use as long as it is not conjoined with right practice carried out with sincere intention.

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[598] Ibid., 91. In his exposition on the relationship between men of conventional knowledge (*ahl al-'ilm*) and men of *ḥikmah* and *ma'rifah*, al-Makkī states that some eminent scholars of religious matters would ask the people of *ḥikmah* and *ma'rifah* regarding certain complicated matters. According to his report, the great jurisprudent al-Shāfi'ī, whenever he would experience difficulty with a jurisprudental matter and not find any solution to it in the Qur'an and *Sunnah*, would visit Shaybān al-Rā'ī and ask about the latter's opinion. Al-Shāfi'ī would consult with Shaybān and the difficulty of the matter would thus disappear. Al-Makkī, *'Ilm*, 85. Similarly, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal would visit Ma'rūf al-Karkhī frequently. When his son Sāliḥ asked him about the reason for this, Aḥmad said, "O my son, Ma'rūf knows the basis (*aṣl*) of the religion and essence (*mukhkh*) of the sciences of God-fearingness/God-consciousness (*tuqā*) and *ḥikmah*." Al-Makkī, *'Ilm*, 85.

[599] Al-Muḥāsibī, *Sharḥ al-ma'rifah*, 56-57. As a side point I should mention that with all such elucidations, al-Muḥāsibī was severely criticized by the *Muḥaddithūn* (Traditionists/Conservationists) of his time, including Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal and Ibn Zur'ah. Ibn Ḥanbal attacked al-Muḥāsibī on account of his making use of Mu'tazilite scholastic (*kalāmī*) arguments in his expositions regarding religious topics. In the view of the traditionist scholars, al-Muḥāsibī was guilty of making a distinction between *'ilm* (knowledge) and *'aql* (intellect) and between *īmān* (faith/belief) and *ma'rifah*. Further, they saw him as admitting the created (*makhlūq*) character of the words of the Qur'an (*lafẓ/alfāẓ*), albeit while still admitting the eternal (*qadīm*) character of their meaning (*ma'nā*). In Ibn Ḥanbal's opinion, such arguments did not have any traditional basis in Muslim primary sources and were merely innovated speculations. Similarly, Ibn Zur'ah criticized al-Muḥāsibī for this reason and called people to stay away from al-Muḥāsibī's works, as he considered them to be full of innovations (*bida'*) and thus misleading. Ali Hassan Abdel-Kader, *The life, personality and writings of al-Junayd* (London, 1962): 24-25.

2. Al-Junayd al-Baghdādī (d. 298/910)

A younger contemporary, and in some respects a student,[600] of al-Muḥāsibī, al-Junayd, further elucidates the concept of knowledge and its proper means as understood by early Sufis. In al-Junayd's case we observe the individual characteristics of Sufi expositions from a personal perspective. Al-Junayd asserts that initially reason/intellect (*'aql*) functions to acquire knowledge of God and leads an indispensable part of the way, since it directs the seeker towards the goal. The character of this acquired knowledge might equally be of a discursive or intuitive nature. But on a higher level, in the state of *tawḥīd*,[601] the wayfarer has no control over his journey. He is completely possessed by God and loses his individuality. At this stage, according to al-Junayd, reason/intellect no longer has any epistemological function.[602] This means that in al-Junayd's understanding and terminology, the ultimate goal is *tawḥīd*, not the *ma'rifah* itself. To be more precise, al-Junayd uses the same word, *ma'rifah*, for two kinds of knowledge on the spiritual path that come at the early and final stages. In the station of *tawḥīd*, which is, once again, the eventual destination, a *muwaḥḥid* wayfarer experiences a distinct unveiling for which al-

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[600] Al-Junayd began his study of traditional scholarly disciplines, including *fiqh* and *ḥadīth*, on the advice of his uncle, Sarī al-Saqaṭī (d. 253/867). Al-Junayd relates that one day as he was going out, his uncle asked him to whose scholarly circle he was going. Al-Junayd replied that he was going to al-Muḥāsibī's class. Sarī then said, "Yes, take his learning and right behavior, but leave aside his speculations in scholastic theology (*kalām*) and his refutation of the *mutakallimūn*." Al-Junayd adds that as he was going out, he heard Sarī saying, "May God make you a *muḥaddith* who is a Sufi, and not a Sufi who is a *muḥaddith* (*ja'alaka Allāhu ṣāḥiba ḥadīthin ṣūfiyyan wa-lā ja'alaka ṣūfiyyan ṣāḥiba ḥadīthin.*)" Al-Makkī, *Qūt* I: 323-324.

[601] In fact, al-Junayd's name is mentioned in Sufi sources among the "masters of declaring God's unity (*arbāb al-tawḥīd*)", a group that is also called the "Baghdadian Sufi school", whose founder may be regarded as Sarī al-Saqaṭī. This group differed from contemporary Sufi schools in Syria and Khorasan. The main focus of the Baghdadian school was *tawḥīd* and it developed the knowledge of *tawḥīd* in mainly eloquent symbolic expressions. Al-Junayd explained this characteristic saying, "Syria is the home of chivalry (*futuwwah*), Iraq of eloquence (*lisān*) and Khorasan of sincerity (*ṣidq*)." Abdel-Kader, 11.

[602] Ibid., 100-101.

Junayd also uses the word *ma'rifah*, but only for want of an alternative term. This *ma'rifah* differs very much from the one at the beginning of the spiritual journey, as it is no more knowledge *of* God, but rather a sharing *in* His knowledge.[603]

Once again, in the example of al-Junayd we see a peculiar and subtle terminological feature. It is clear that in general terms, the Sufis believe that the knowledge of God cannot be acquired by means of reason/intellect (*'aql*). This belief is based on the conviction that this knowledge is beyond the ken of reason and logical comprehension, since God is immaterial. Such knowledge, instead, can only be acquired through the process and as the result of an illumination, inspiration and/or revelation. In order to make their position of opposition to the concept of *'ilm* as held by the theologians clearer, they use the term *ma'rifah* in the sense of direct intuitive knowledge of God based on revelation and unveiling. From this perspective, accordingly, they regard *ma'rifah* to be higher and more authoritative than *'ilm*.[604]

Despite this terminological generalization, however, some eminent Sufis, including al-Junayd, do not pay very strict attention to this conceptual framework. When they speak of God, they use the words *'ilm* and *ma'rifah* interchangeably. According to al-Junayd's explanation, since the object of this knowledge is one – namely, knowledge of God – it is of the same nature whether sought by the friends of God or by ordinary men. But still there is a difference between the two modes of "knowing"; that is to say,

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[603] Ibid., 102.

[604] Ibid., 96-97.

there is a difference in degree between the friends of God and ordinary men, since the former have a higher degree of knowledge of Him.[605]

As for al-Junayd's understanding of knowledge on a more scholastic plane, as far as its reliability regarding the knowledge of God is concerned, it is clear that he is not very much in favor of such knowledge. According to Ibn Khaldūn's report, one day al-Junayd was passing by a group of theologians who were elaborately expounding their views with respect to God. When al-Junayd asked about those people, he was told that they were people who would use proofs to show that God has none of the attributes of created things or any sign of imperfection. Al-Junayd then said, "The denial of a fault (*'ayb*) which could never possibly exist, is a fault in itself."[606] Similar to his predecessors in the field, al-Junayd puts great emphasis on the practical aspect of Sufism. He declares that *taṣawwuf* is not about prattling, but about suffering from hunger and abandoning this-worldly things; after all, *taṣawwuf*, in the final analysis, means having a pure and sincere relationship with God.[607]

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[605] Ibid., 97-99. Al-Makkī reports that in al-Junayd's view, *'ilm* is more prestigious, complete and comprehensive than *ma'rifah*. For this reason, God is named with *'ilm* (*al-'ālim* in 6:73 and *al-'alīm* in 8:43) and not with *ma'rifah*. Al-Makkī, *'Ilm*, 99. At the same time, however, al-Makkī talks about this matter from another point of view. He narrates the comparison between *'ilm* and *ma'rifah* by some early authorities who say, "Surely *ma'rifah* is greater, because during the questioning (*su'āl*) in the Hereafter, the prophets will say, 'We do not have any *'ilm* (*lā 'ilma la-nā*),' but they will not say, 'We do not have any *ma'rifah* (*lā ma'rifata la-nā*).' *'Ilm* was given to Adam, David and Solomon as the Qur'an states (27:15), 'Indeed We had given knowledge (*'ilm*) to David and Solomon'; and (2:31), 'He taught Adam the names, all of them'. As for Muḥammad, he was given *ma'rifah* as is indicated in the Qur'an (47:30), 'You would know them (*la-'araftahum*) by their mark; but you will certainly know them (*la-ta'rifannahum*) in the twisting of their speech'." Al-Makkī, *'Ilm*, 85-86. In this context, al-Makkī uses the word *ma'rifah* as a synonym of *ḥikmah* and asserts that all these explanations show the value of *ḥikmah*. Al-Makkī, *'Ilm*, 86.

[606] Ibn Khaldun, *al-Muqaddimah*, ed. 'Alī 'Abd al-Wāḥid Wāfī (Cairo, 1960) III: 1049.

[607] Al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 158; al-Qushayrī, *al-Risalāh*, 20-21. According to al-Qushayrī, Dhū al-Nūn further clarifies this essential point and relates it to Sufi epistemology saying, "Certainty calls one to cut short one's expectation (*qaṣr al-amal*) [for this-worldly things] and cutting short one's expectation calls one to asceticism; asceticism [in turn] bequeaths *ḥikmah*, and *ḥikmah* leads to the discerning of outcomes (*naẓar fī al-'awāqib*)." Al-Qushayrī, *al-Risalāh*, 91. See also al-Sayyid Abū Ḍayf al-Madanī, *Dhū al-Nūn al-Miṣrī*

3. Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Nūrī (d. 295/907)

Another leading Baghdadi Sufi figure of the 3rd/9th century, al-Nūrī, introduces a more psychologically-oriented analysis of Sufi epistemology. His central concept is the notion of "heart" (*qalb*), around which he arranges other related terms, including *'aql* (intellect), *'ilm* (knowledge) and *ma'rifah* (gnosis) and articulates his points. In the following lines, I will examine al-Nūrī's discussions in his only surviving work, *Maqāmāt al-qulūb*.[608]

As holds true in al-Nūrī's personal case, the "heart" in the Sufi terminology is regarded both as the source of man's good and evil aspirations and as the seat of learning through a spiritual process. Accordingly, the Sufis speak of the "science of hearts and movements of the soul or incoming thoughts" (*'ilm al-qulūb wa-al-khawāṭir*), a science which, as I have mentioned before, allegedly owes its origin to al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī. Throughout his expositions, al-Nūrī uses a language very close to Qur'anic statements and relies primarily on Qur'anic concepts. Even though his categorizations may not be regarded as presentations systematic enough to establish a comprehensive epistemological theory, they nonetheless represent the earliest attestations of the later, more sophisticated Sufi terminology. Al-Nūrī's arguments merit examination especially with respect to his explanations of various divisions of the human organs of perception and their various functions, as well as of the various kinds of Divine support (light) these organs receive on the spiritual path.

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wa-al-adab al-ṣūfī (Cairo, 1973): 71. A friend of Dhū al-Nūn, al-Kharrāz, defines *zuhd* as "drawing the value of things away from the heart." Al-Kharrāz, 75.

[608] Sezgin, I: 650.

Qalb is a recurring Qur'anic term. It is the faculty of comprehension (*la-hum qulūbun lā-yafqahūna bi-hā*) (7:179)[609] and of understanding or reasoning (*la-hum qulūbun ya'qilūna bi-hā*) (22: 46); the basis of religious responsibility (*yu'ākhidhukum bi-mā kasabat qulūbukum*) (2:225) and (*mā ta'ammadat qulūbukum*) (33:5); the seat of belief (*wa-lam tu'min qulūbuhum*) (5:41) and (*qulūbuhum munkirah*) (16:22). *Qalb* is thus the source of knowledge and conscience, just as the eyes and ears are the means to see and hear, respectively (7:179). As the real addressee of the Qur'anic message, the *qalb* determines man's response to the Divine revelation and is the origin of man's awareness or ignorance of God; in the final analysis, according to the Qur'an, "it is not their eyes that are blind, but the hearts in their breasts" (22:46). The science of the heart relies on an experiential epistemological process, rather than merely on intellectual and sense perceptions. Correspondingly, the Sufis, according to L. Gardet, maintained that

> the seat of thought and awareness of self lay not in the brain but in the heart, a bodily organ (*jismī*), a morsel of flesh (*muḍghah, maḍīghah*), situated in the hollow of the breast whose beats both gave life and indicated the presence of life. There in the heart lies the "secret and hidden (*sirr*) home of conscience, whose secrets (*najwā*) will be revealed on Judgment Day."[610]

In Sufi terminology, there is an innate relationship between the heart and *ḥikmah*. According to al-Makkī's narration from earlier Sufi masters, they say,

> The light of the heart comes from *ḥikmah*, and its darkness from food; its construction (*'imāratuhu*) originates in much thinking, while its destruction (*kharābuhu*) [originates in] lengthening heedlessness/negligence (*ghaflah*) and harshness (*qaswah*).[611]

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[609] Al-Makkī asserts that originally, comprehension (*fiqh*) occurs in the heart as is mentioned in 7:179, "They have hearts (*qulūb*) with which they do not comprehend (*lā yafqahūna bi-hā*)." Al-Makkī, *Qut* I: 313. Al-Makkī also says that the Arabs use the nouns *fiqh* and *fahm* in the same sense and thus they say, "*faqihta*" in the sense of "*fahimta.*" Ibid., I: 314.

[610] Louis Gardet, "Ḳalb" in *EI²*.

[611] Al-Makkī, *'Ilm*, 54.

In Islamic intellectual history, Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) was one of the leading authorities to write a relatively explicit exposition on *qalb*. In the first book of the third part of his famous *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn,* he elaborates the wonders of the heart (*'ajā'ib al-qalb*) and analyses four interrelated concepts: *qalb*, *rūḥ*, *nafs* and *'aql*. For each term, he introduces a physical and a spiritual definition, concluding that the four concepts designate man's authentic nature, but in four different ways. Al-Ghazālī asserts that the dignity and high rank of man manifests itself in proportion to his capacity with respect to the knowledge of God (*ma'rifat Allāh*). The seat of this knowledge is the *qalb* rather than any other of the human organs, but the *qalb* makes use of these organs in their proper and authorized realms to gain knowledge. Al-Ghazālī states that the physical heart is delicately related to the spiritual heart, which is a subtle and lordly spiritual thing (*laṭīfah rabbāniyyah rūhāniyyah*). This heart is the reality of man and his means of knowledge. At the same time, this heart is the actual addressee of the heavenly instructions and the basis of religious responsibility. Al-Ghazālī does not attempt to elaborate the reality of the heart in this second sense, as he states that this is a matter of revealing the secret of the spirit (*sirr al-rūḥ*), of which the Prophet did not speak.[612]

On a more psychological plane, on the other hand, al-Qushayrī, who was the master of al-Ghazālī's master Abū 'Alī al-Farmaḍī, analyzes the structure of human inward consciousness into a four-dimensional arrangement consisting of *nafs*, *qalb*, *rūḥ* and *sirr*. In this restricted application, *nafs* is regarded as the seat of blameworthy moral characteristics, while *qalb* and *rūḥ* are characterized as places of praiseworthy moral

[612] Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* (Cairo, 1967) III: 3-6.

characteristics. As for *sirr*, which is the deepest dimension of human consciousness, it is considered to be the seat of witnessing (*mushāhadah*).[613]

Let me now return to al-Nūrī. Al-Nūrī, who is called the "prince of hearts (*amīr al-qulūb*)"[614] and at whose death al-Junayd said, "half of Sufism is gone"[615], asserts that there are four principal stations of the heart (*maqāmāt al-qulūb*)[616]. Accordingly, God designates the heart by one of these four names: *ṣadr* (breast, bosom), *qalb* (heart), *fu'ād* (inner heart) and *lubb* (the innermost kernel of the heart).[617] In accordance with the Qur'anic testimony, "So is he whose bosom (*ṣadr*) God has expanded for Islam" (39:22), the *ṣadr* is the seat (*ma'din*) of submission (*islām*); the *qalb* is the seat of faith (*īmān*), as the Qur'an reads, "But God has endeared *īmān* to you and beautified it in your hearts (*fī qulūbikum*)" (49:7); the *fu'ād* is the seat of gnosis/intuitive knowledge (*ma'rifah*) as the Qur'an indicates, "The *fu'ād* lied not (in seeing) what it saw" (53:11); and the *lubb* is the

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[613] Al-Qushayrī, *al-Risālah*, 48-49.

[614] 'Aṭṭār, II: 50.

[615] Annemarie Schimmel, "al-Nūrī" in *EI²*.

[616] The hierarchical interpretation of Sufi terms is a common tradition among Sufi writers. Throughout his *Qūt al-qulūb*, al-Makkī repeatedly highlights various *maqāmāt* of Sufi concepts; for instance, he articulates the stations of certainty in knowledge (*maqāmāt al-yaqīn*) and of the convinced ones (*maqāmāt al-mūqinīn*). In his list of stations of certainty (*maqāmāt al-yaqīn*), al-Makkī mentions nine stations as follows: the stations of repentance (*tawbah*), patience (*ṣabr*), thankfulness (*shukr*), hope (*rajā'*), God-fearingness (*khawf*), asceticism (*zuhd*), trust (in God) (*tawakkul*), contentment (*riḍā'*), and love (*maḥabbah*). Al-Makkī, *Qūt* I: 361-537 and II: 7-159.
Historically, Dhū al-Nūn is regarded as one of the earliest Sufis to give systematic explanations pertaining to the mystic states (*aḥwāl*) and stations (*maqāmāt*). As I have mentioned above, he is also considered the earliest Sufi to teach the true nature of intuitive knowledge or gnosis (*ma'rifah*), which he describes as "knowledge of the attributes of Unity, and this belongs to the saints, those who contemplate the Face of God within their hearts, so that God reveals Himself to them in a way in which He is not revealed to any others in the world." "The gnostics are not themselves, but in so far as they exist at all, they exist in God." Margaret Smith, "Dhū al-Nūn" in *EI²*. See also Massignon, *Recueil*, 15.

[617] A similarly categorized terminology is employed by Ja'far al-Ṣādiq as well. He pairs *ṣadr* with submission (*taslīm*), *qalb* with certainty (*yaqīn*), *fu'ād* with contemplation (*naẓar*), *ḍamīr* – which is not originally a Qur'anic term, though it is used by al-Nūrī in his epistle as well, but seemingly not in a technical sense – with secret (*sirr*), and designates *nafs* as the refuge of all good and evil things. Nwyia, *Exégèse coranique et langage mystique* (Beirut, 1970): 321.

seat of declaring God's unity/Oneness (*tawḥīd*) as the Qur'an witnesses, "There are signs for men of understanding (*ulū al-albāb*)" (3:190). Thus the *lubb*, *fu'ād*, *qalb* and *ṣadr* are the containers of *tawḥīd*, *ma'rifah*, *īmān* and *islām*, respectively. Furthermore, *tawḥīd* denotes the declaration that God is absolutely different from and above creation, while *ma'rifah* refers to the affirmation of His exalted attributes (*ṣifāt*) and Most Beautiful Names (*al-asmā' al-ḥusnā*). *Īmān* functions as a catalyst purifying the heart from all desires other than God. *Islām*, finally, signifies the submission of all secret and exposed affairs to God.[618]

Al-Nūrī further asserts that the four concepts are subtly interrelated, for the veracity of *ma'rifah* is dependent on *tawḥīd*. Similarly, the reliability of *īmān* and *islām* is based on *ma'rifah* and *īmān*, respectively. Thus, he who does not have access to *tawḥīd* cannot attain *ma'rifah* either. Likewise, he who does not experience *ma'rifah* and *īmān* cannot acquire *īmān* and *islām*, respectively. And whoever does not reach *islām* cannot benefit from any of his other deeds.[619]

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[618] Abū al-Ḥusayn Al-Nūrī, "Maqāmāt al-qulūb," ed. Paul Nwyia, *Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph* 44 (1968): 130. The same *risālah* has also been edited by Ahmet Subhi Furat, "Abu'l-Ḥuseyn an-Nūrī ve Maḳāmāt al-Ḳulūb adlı risālesi," *İslam Tetkikleri Enstitüsü Dergisi* 7 (1978) : 345-355. Although Furat edited the *risālah* independently of Nwyia's edition, and used two more manuscripts than Nwyia did, the two editions are basically the same. My references will be to Nwyia's edition.

[619] Al-Nūrī, 130-131. The hierarchical formation of mystical knowledge is elaborated by another classical Sufi author, al-Niffarī (d. *ca.* 366/976-7). He, however, introduces the term *waqfah* as a technical concept referring to direct Divine audition. According to his explanations, *waqfah* indicates a higher spiritual knowledge than *ma'rifah*, which itself is above *'ilm*. Al-Niffarī, *Kitāb al-Mawāqif*, ed. A. J. Arberry (Cairo, 1934): 13-16. See also A. J. Arberry, "al-Niffarī" in *EI²*.
An earlier authority on Sufism, Abū Sa'īd al-Kharrāz, presents a more multi-leveled ontological as well as epistemological exposition when he argues that the first and initial *maqām* on the spiritual path is the *maqām* of repentance (*tawbah*). The following *maqāmāt* are the *maqāmāt* of those who have God-fearingness (*khawf*), then those who have hope (*rajā'*), followed by the righteous ones (*ṣālihūn*), the desiring ones (*murīdūn*), the obedient ones (*muṭī'ūn*), the lovers (*muḥibbūn*), the yearning/longing ones (*mushtāqūn*), the saints/friends of God (*awliyā'*) and the intimate ones (*muqarrabūn*), in succession. See editor's introduction to al-Kharrāz, 16-17.
Al-Kalābādhī, on the other hand, elucidates the concept of *ma'rifah* (literally *ta'arruf*) and relates Ibn 'Aṭā's (d. 309/922) gradational interpretation of *ta'arruf*. The latter asserts that originally *ta'arruf* is of three kinds: the first kind of *ta'arruf* is for ordinary people (*'āmmah*) and is based on God's creation, as the

In an effort to clarify the psychological background of the four concepts, al-Nūrī continues his argument that attaining the light of *islām* is dependent on being vigilant regarding the last moments of life (*'awāqib*); the light of *īmān* is tied to one's alertness to calamities (*tawāriq*); the light of *ma'rifah* is dependent on the remembrance of past deeds (*sawābiq*); and the light of *tawḥīd* is dependent on the unveiling of spiritual realities (*ḥaqā'iq*). Correspondingly, being vigilant regarding the *'awāqib* requires ruling/directing the souls (*siyāsat al-nufūs*); alertness to the *ṭawāriq* requires the spiritual training of souls (*riyāḍat al-nufūs*); remembrance of the *sawābiq* requires keeping watch over the heart (*ḥirāsat al-qalb*); and witnessing (*mushāhadah*) the *ḥaqā'iq* requires attention to rights/realities (*ri'āyah al-ḥuqūq*), because *siyāsah*, *ḥirāsah*, *riyāḍah* and

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Qur'an explains, "Do they not look at the camels, how they were created?" (88:17); the second kind of *ta'arruf* is based on His word and attributes, and it is directed to the spiritual elites (*khāṣṣah*), as the Qur'an indicates, "Will they not ponder on the Qur'an?" (4:82), "We send down in the Qur'an that which is a healing and a mercy for believers" (17:82), and "To God belong the Most Beautiful Names" (7:180); and the third kind of *ta'arruf* is related to Himself and revealed only to the prophets, as the Qur'an underscores, "And thus We have revealed a Spirit to you by Our Command" (42:52) and "Have you not seen how your Lord stretches out the shadow?" (25:45). Al-Kalābādhī, 70.

In his exposition of the concept of "thankfulness (*shukr*)" mentioned in verse 14:7, "If you are thankful (*la-in shakartum*), surely I will increase you (*wa-la-azīdannakum*)," al-Makkī introduces another gradational relationship between the notions of *islām*, *īmān*, *iḥsān* and *'irfān*. This order reflects the three broad categories of degrees in spiritual realization as *islām*, *īmān* and *iḥsān* that are mentioned in the famous *ḥadīth* of Gabriel, but with the addition of *'irfān*, which seems to be treated as the highest spiritual notion in Sufism in this context. Al-Makkī reports that some earlier authorities interpreted this verse as follows, "If you are thankful for submission (*islām*), surely I will increase you in faith (*īmān*), if you are thankful for *īmān*, surely I will increase you in virtue or beneficence/excellence (*iḥsān*), and if you are thankful for *iḥsān*, surely I will increase you in gnosis (*'irfān*)." Al-Makkī, *'Ilm*, 23.

In general terms, it is a convention that the Sufis employ the term *'ilm* most often for the knowledge acquired through reason, sense perception and physical experience, which presupposes a former ignorance, as opposed to the term *ma'rifah* which refers to knowledge based on a direct awareness and spontaneous revealing. On a more linguistic plane, however, *ma'rifah* is applied to the perception of simple (*basīṭ*) concepts, while *'ilm* refers to composite (*murakkab*) and multiple (*muta'addid*) concepts. Hence, as far as God is concerned, the statement, "I have cognition of God (*'araftu Allāha*)" is correct, but not, "I have knowledge of God (*'alimtu Allāha*)," because God is a simple entity. Roger Arnaldez, "Ma'rifa" in *EI²*.

Given these considerations, nevertheless, *'ilm* and *ma'rifah* do not seem to be definitively categorized terms in the eyes of all Sufis. Ibn al-'Arabī, for example, sometimes employs *'ilm* and *ma'rifah* interchangeably. See William C. Chittick, *The Sufi path of knowledge: Ibn al-'Arabī's metaphysics of imagination* (Albany, 1989): 148-149.

ri'āyah lead to affirmation (*taṣdīq*), realization (*taḥqīq*), success granted by God (*tawfīq*) and Reality/Truth (*al-ḥaqq*), respectively.[620]

Al-Nūrī further explains that *siyāsah* means protecting and understanding the soul; *riyāḍah* denotes disciplining and dominating the soul; *ḥirāsah* signifies perusing (*muṭāla'ah*) God's benefaction in the hearts; and *ri'āyah* means observing God's rights in secret matters. Accordingly, *ri'āyah*, *ḥirāsah*, *riyāḍah* and *siyāsah* require keeping promises, observing boundaries (*ḥudūd*), satisfaction with what is at hand (*mawjūd*) and patience in the face of loss (*mafqūd*). Al-Nūrī concludes that all these characteristics are prescribed by God implicitly and explicitly (*sirran wa-'alāniyatan*), outwardly/exoterically and inwardly/esoterically (*ẓāhiran wa-bāṭinan*).[621]

After the abovementioned introductory remarks, al-Nūrī compares the *mu'min*'s *qalb* to a house. Out of His generosity, God sends a wind to that house to clean it from polytheism (*shirk*), doubt (*shakk*), hypocrisy (*nifāq*) and disunity (*shiqāq*). Next, in order to implant certainty (*yaqīn*), trust in God (*tawakkul*), sincerity (*ikhlāṣ*), fear (*khawf*), hope (*rajā'*) and love (*maḥabbah*), He sends a cloud and rain to that house out of His grace. Then God creates other praiseworthy characteristics such as contentment (*riḍā*) and *ma'rifah* in that house. Finally, God locks its door and keeps the keys Himself; no one is authorized to enter that house, including Gabriel and Michael because God has said, "This is my treasury (*khizānatī*) on my property (*arḍī*), the seat of my sight (*naẓarī*), the residence of my *tawḥīd*, and I am the Resident of this house."[622]

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[620] Al-Nūrī, 131.

[621] Ibid., 131.

[622] Ibid., 131-132.

Al-Nūrī elaborates on this by maintaining that God has established seven successive qualities in a *mu'min*'s heart so that he can know Him (*'arafahu*). All these characteristics rely on Qur'anic notions: gentleness (*līn*),[623] expansion (*tawassu'*),[624] healing sickness (*shifā' min al-maraḍ*),[625] guidance (*hidāyah*),[626] peacefulness and tranquility (*sakīnah* and *ṭuma'nīnah*),[627] and finally enlightenment (*tanwīr*).[628] Again based on Qur'anic references, al-Nūrī asserts that at the same time, God has implanted seven successive hindrances in unbelievers' hearts which prevent them from faith and knowledge: constrictedness (*ḍīq*),[629] harshness (*ṣalābah*),[630] gloom (*sawād*),[631] darkness (*ẓulmah*),[632] sealing (*khatm*),[633] locking (*iqfāl*),[634] and finally denial (*inkār*).[635] Al-Nūrī argues that because of these subtle obstacles located in the hearts of unbelievers, the latter tend to take an indifferent attitude towards Divine prescriptions.[636]

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[623] "Then their skins and hearts soften to God's remembrance" (39:23).

[624] "So is one whose breast God has expanded unto Islam and he walks in a light from his Lord" (39:22).

[625] "God heals the breasts (*ṣudūr*) of a believing people" (9:14).

[626] "But God has endeared *īmān* to you and beautified it in your hearts" (49:7).

[627] "He is the One Who sent down peacefulness into the hearts (*qulūb*) of the believers" (48:4).

[628] "God guides whom He wills to His light" (24:35).

[629] "Whomsoever He wills to lead astray, He makes his breast constricted (*ḍayyiqan*) and narrow (*ḥarajan*)" (6:125).

[630] "Then your hearts became rigid thereafter" (2:74).

[631] "No! Their own deeds have cast a veil over their hearts" (83:14).

[632] "They said, 'Our hearts are hardened'" (2:88).

[633] "God has set a seal (*khatama Allāhu*) on their hearts" (2:7).

[634] "Or are there locks (*aqfāl*) upon their hearts" (47:24).

[635] "Those who do not believe in the life to come, their hearts deny (*munkirah*)" (16:22).

[636] Al-Nūrī, 133.

Al-Nūrī states that originally, hearts are of three kinds. The first kind is the heart of disobedient people (*'usāh*), whose hearts are ruined (*kharāb*), are dwelling places of devils, and are full of corruption and impurity. The second kind of heart is the heart of the obedient (*muṭī'*) believers, who are knowledgeable (*'alīm*), active (*'āmil*) and sincere (*mukhliṣ*) servants of God. The third kind of heart is the heart of believers who attain gnosis or intuitive knowledge (*'ārifūn*). This heart resembles a treasury full of diamonds and sapphires, and it abides in the presence of God.[637]

Al-Nūrī continues his treatise on the heart by introducing detailed accounts of the chief characteristics of a *mu'min*'s heart. He argues that as long as a *mu'min* keeps his spiritual maturity alive, his heart is protected by seven spiritual fortresses: a) intuitive knowledge of God (*mar'ifat Allāh*), b) belief in God (*īmān bi-Allāh*), c) sincerity in word and deed (*ikhlāṣ bi-al-qawl wa-al-'amal*), d) contentment with the Divine decree (*riḍā' bi-qaḍā' Allāh*), e) performing Divinely prescribed obligations (*qiyām bi-farā'iḍ Allāh*), f) observing Divine commands and prohibitions (*qiyām bi-'amr Allāh wa-nahyih*), and g) disciplining the *nafs* (*ta'dīb al-nafs*). Al-Nūrī concludes that when a *mu'min* begins to fail in accomplishing one of these characteristics, he also begins to loose his spiritual protection and becomes vulnerable to Satan's tricks.[638]

Al-Nūrī explains that an *'ārif*'s heart contains three lights: the light of *ma'rifah*, the light of intelligence (*'aql*) and the light of knowledge (*'ilm*). He symbolizes *ma'rifah*, *'aql* and *'ilm* by the sun, moon and stars, respectively. The lights of *ma'rifah*, *'aql* and *'ilm* restrain (*yastur*) caprice (*hawā*), passion (*shahwah*) and ignorance (*jahl*),

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[637] Ibid., 134.

[638] Ibid., 135-136.

respectively. Furthermore, through the same lights, a *mu'min* can see his Lord (*yarā al-Rabb*), meet Reality/Truth (*yaqbal al-Ḥaqq*) and act through Him (*ya'mal bi-al-Ḥaqq*), respectively.[639] Al-Nūrī asserts that on account of Divine grace, the brightness of these spiritual lights may increase even to the degrees symbolically comparable to the moon and sun. When the light of *ma'rifah* appears in an *'ārif*'s heart, he feels indifference towards this world and the things of it. When this light attains the luminosity of the moon's brightness, the *'ārif* becomes oblivious to the hereafter (*ākhirah*) and what belongs to it. And finally, when the light of *ma'rifah* reaches the degree of the sun's radiance, the *'ārif* neither cares for this world nor the hereafter and what is of them, and he knows nothing but God. His body, heart and speech become full of light, just as the Qur'anic statement, "Light upon light! God guides to His light whom He will." (24:35)[640]

Al-Nūrī states that the marks of a *mu'min*'s heart are threefold. It suppresses sins by the veil of repentance (*tawbah*), it eliminates all pride in good deeds by the veil of remembrance/mindfulness (*dhikr*), and it removes all diversions or distractions by the veil of love for God (*ḥubb Allāh*) to the degree that the *mu'min*'s heart becomes completely empty, except of love for Him. [641] According to al-Nūrī's writings, such a

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[639] Ibid., 137.

[640] Ibid., 138. This must be similar to his conclusion when he utters, "I looked into the light until I became that light myself." Schimmel, "Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Nūrī: Qibla of the Lights," *The Heritage of Sufism*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn (Oxford and Boston, 1999) I: 60.

[641] In general, al-Nūrī is regarded as one of the most emotional – contrary to his sober and prudent friend al-Junayd – of the early Sufis. His treatment of *maḥabbah* and *'ishq* reveals his deeply emotional mystical tendency. For instance, according to 'Aṭṭār's writings, al-Nūrī was the one who was weeping alongside with the sad Iblīs who claimed to be a true lover (*'āshiq*) of God. 'Aṭṭār, II: 51. On the basis of the Qur'anic phrase, "whom He loves and who love Him" (5:54), al-Nūrī asserts that *'ishq* is not a higher spiritual stage than *maḥabbah* (*wa-laysa al-ishq bi-'akthar min al-maḥabbah*). Massignon, *Recueil*, 51; for al-Nūrī, "Love is to tear the veils and unveil the secrets." Schimmel, "Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Nūrī," 62. Abū Bakr al-Shiblī (d. 334/945), on the other hand, argues that knowledge of God (*ma'rifah*) requires love (*maḥabbah*) of Him, for whoever knows Him loves Him. Al-Sulamī, *Muqaddimah*, 31.

person's speech is restricted to the language of praise (*lisān al-ḥamd*), thankfulness (*lisān al-shukr*), complaint (*lisān al-shikāyah*) and excuse (*lisān al-ma'dhirah*). Through *lisān al-ḥamd* he speaks of God's graces; through *lisān al-shukr* he expresses his thankfulness for His creation; through *lisān al-shikāyah* he complains about his *nafs* to his Lord; and through *lisān al-ma'dhirah* he asks his Lord's forgiveness for his sins.[642]

Al-Nūrī symbolically describes the heart of a gnostic (*'ārif*) saying that it has ten gardens: a) the garden of *tawḥīd*; b) the garden of the way [to God] (*sabīl*); c) the garden of certainty (*yaqīn*), d) the garden of humility (*tawāḍu'*); e) the garden of the lawful [things] (*ḥalāl*); f) the garden of forbearance (*ḥilm*); g) the garden of generosity (*sakhāwah*); h) the garden of contentment (*riḍā*); i) the garden of sincerity (*ikhlāṣ*); and j) the garden of knowledge (*'ilm*). A believer (*mu'min*) keeps a very watchful eye on his gardens. If he sees thorns of polytheism and/or hypocrisy in the garden of *tawḥīd*, he plucks them out and throws them away; if he sees caprice (*hawā*) and/or innovation (*bid'ah*) in the garden of the *sabīl*, he plucks those out as well. Likewise, if he sees doubt (*shakk*) and/or uncertainty (*ẓann*), conceit (*'ujb*) and/or pride/haughtiness (*kibr*), unlawful [things] and/or suspicion (*shubhah*), hatred (*bughḍ*) and/or annoyance (*qahr*), greed (*bukhl*) and/or stinginess (*shuḥḥ*), eyeservice (*riyā'*) and/or fame (*sum'ah*), anxiety (*jaza'*) and/or complaint (*shakwā*), ignorance (*jahl*) and/or negligence (*ghaflah*) in the gardens of *yaqīn*, *tawāḍu'*, *ḥalāl*, *ḥilm*, *sakhāwah*, *ikhlāṣ*, *riḍā* and *'ilm*, respectively, he plucks them all out likewise.[643]

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[642] Al-Nūrī, 140.

[643] Ibid., 142.

Al-Nūrī continues his psychological analysis of mystical concepts. For instance, he states that the spiritual rain on the human heart is of two kinds: the rain of grace (*maṭar al-raḥmah*) and the rain of wrath (*maṭar al-naqmah*). The former ceases to descend when the *qulūb* are polluted by making a show of one's piety (*riyā'*), when *'aql* is polluted by pretentiousness (*da'wā*), or when the heart is polluted by hypocrisy (*nifāq*). Therefore, according to its inclination, a heart is either fertilized or destroyed by the Divine rain.[644] In his succeeding lines, al-Nūrī further highlights the heart's various subtle spiritual characteristics, which manifest themselves according to the spiritual ranking of the person, i.e., *kāfir, mu'min, 'ārif, walī*, and the like.[645]

Alongside such technical expositions of *qalb*, al-Nuri – similar to his predecessors as well as his followers – puts great stress on the practical aspect of Sufism. For him, "Sufism consists not of forms (*rusūm*) and sciences (*'ulūm*) but of good moral qualities (*akhlāq*)."[646] His explanations are built on the assumption that the outward manifestations of religion should be visible first; then they are to be followed by their interiorization and their use as symbolic figures. Meantime, *ma'rifah* arises in the different reactions of human beings to God's revelation. Finally, at the station of absolute *tawḥīd*, which is embedded in the deepest cell of the heart where one may find the Divine, this process furnishes an existential and epistemological experience. In accordance with this method, true and ultimate knowledge – knowledge of God – cannot be grasped by means of intellect alone (*'aql*), but only by means of faith and love.

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[644] Ibid., 143.

[645] Ibid., 143.

[646] Al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 167. Similarly, one of the most profound motives of al-Nūrī was the famous Sufi principle, "Qualify yourselves with God's qualities (*takhallaqū bi-'akhlāq Allāh*)", which refers to substituting for each lowly quality a praiseworthy one. Schimmel, "Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Nūrī," 60.

In this context, al-Nūrī's understanding of *'aql* is also worth mentioning. According to al-Sarrāj's accounts, al-Nūrī was once asked, "Through what [means] do you know God?" He replied, "Through God (*bi-Allāh*)." He was further asked, "What about the *'aql*?" He said,

> The *'aql* is an impotent thing (*'ājiz*), and it can give only the knowledge of impotent things like itself, for when God created the *'aql*, He asked it, "Who am I?" The *'aql* was silent. As soon as God polished it by the light of Oneness (*nūr al-waḥdāniyyah*), the *'aql* replied, "You are God." Thus the *'aql* could know God only through God (*bi-Allāh*).[647]

Similarly, when al-Nūrī was asked, "What was the first Divine order unto man?" he replied,

> *Ma'rifah*, for God said has, "I created the jinn and humankind only that they might worship Me (*li-ya'budūni*)" (51:56) and Ibn 'Abbās pointed out that "*li-ya'budūni* means *li-ya'rifūni.*"[648]

As far as al-Nūrī's treatment of the concept of *ḥikmah* is concerned, throughout his expositions he does not seem to give any special consideration to it. He uses *ḥikmah* only twice in his epistle. In the first instance, *ḥikmah* is described as a heavenly fruit (*thamarah*) given to the heart as a result of a secret and intimate conversation with God (*munājāh*).[649] In the second case, al-Nūrī talks about *ḥikmah* as an intermediary epistemological concept on the spiritual path. He compares the gnosis (*ma'rifah*) in the heart of a believer to a tree having seven branches: the first he likens to the eyes of the believer; the second to his tongue (*lisān*); the third to his heart (*qalb*); the fourth to his soul (*nafs*); the fifth to his Lord's creation (*khalq rabbihi*); the sixth to the Hereafter (*ākhirah*); and the seventh to his Lord. Al-Nūrī asserts that for each branch there are two fruits (*thamarah*): the fruits of the eyes are weeping (*bukā'*) and taking an admonition

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[647] Abū Nasr al-Sarrāj, *al-Luma'*, ed. 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd and Ṭāhā 'Abd al-Bāqī Surūr (Cairo, 1960): 63. For the same narration, see al-Kalābādhī, 69.

[648] Al-Sarrāj, 63.

[649] Al-Nūrī, 135.

(*'ibrah*), the fruits of the tongue are knowledge (*'ilm*) and *ḥikmah*, and the fruits of the following branches are: yearning (*shawq*) and repentance (*anābah*), asceticism (*zuhd*) and worship (*'ibādah*), faithfulness (*wafā'*) and trustworthiness (*amānah*), felicity (*na'īm*) and paradise (*jannah*), and vision (*ru'yah*) and nearness (*qurbah*), respectively.[650]

4. Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (d. *ca.* 300/912)

Another eminent mystical figure of the 3rd/9th century, al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, also elaborates on the four subtly interrelated *maqāmāt al-qulūb* from a psychological and epistemological perspective. Before going into a detailed analysis of his writings on the concept of *qalb* in his work, *Bayān al-farq bayn al-ṣadr wa-al-qalb wa-al-fu'ād wa-al-lubb*,[651] I would like to talk a little bit about al-Tirmidhī's title, *al-Ḥakīm*, on the basis of

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[650] Ibid., 141.

[651] I should mention that even though bibliographical sources mention that al-Tirmidhī did write a work with this title (see, for instance, Sezgin, I: 655), several scholars including Bernd Radtke and 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Barakah have questioned the authenticity of this work. In Radtke's view, its style, especially the use of *saj'* (rhymed prose), is at odds with to al-Tirmidhī's usual terminology and the epistle is wrongly ascribed to him, but I personally could not make much sense out of such an argument. Bernd Radtke, "The concept of *Wilaya* in early Sufism," *Classical Persian Sufism: from its origins to Rumi*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn (London, 1993) I: 486-487. Radtke repeats this argument in his other works, including the last one, to fortify his points. Radtke, "Some Recent Research on al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī," *Der Islam* 83 (2006): 53. For Barakah's view, see 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Barakah, *al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī wa-naẓariyyatuhu fī al-wilāyah* (Cairo, 1971) I: 10. Seeing this situation, nevertheless, I will make use of *Bayān al-farq* on account of its detailed and precise description of the heart and its various functions with respect to Sufi epistemology. My main motive for doing so is the fact that the terminology found in *Bayān al-farq* does not directly contradict al-Tirmidhī's usual terminology found in his other works of which I have made use throughout my investigation. For instance, in his analysis of the stations of heart in his *Khatm al-awliyā'*, al-Tirmidhī presents elucidations parallel to the ones in *Bayān al-farq*. Al-Tirmidhī, *Kitāb Khatm al-awliyā'*, ed. 'Uthmān Yaḥyā (Beirut, 1965): 128 (al-Tirmidhī, *Kitāb Sīrat al-awliyā'* in *Thalāth muṣannafāt li-al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī*, ed. Bernd Radtke [Beirut, 1992]: 10-12). Similarly, when he explains the notion of *ṣadr* in *Khatm al-awliyā'*, al-Tirmidhī introduces expositions comparable to the ones in *Bayān al-farq*. Al-Tirmidhī, *Kitāb Khatm al-awliyā'*, 130-132 (al-Tirmidhī, *Kitāb Sīrat al-awliyā'*, 12-13). Massignon also provides scholarly materials which lead us to consider *Bayān al-farq* as an authentic work by al-Tirmidhī. It is also known that the "science of the hearts", with a special focus on distinquishing *ṣadr* from *qalb*, was an important concept in al-Tirmidhī's terminology. Massignon, *Essai*, 293-294.

which he has been associated with philosophy, especially of the Hellenistic type.[652] We do not know for sure the origin of the attribution of this title to al-Tirmidhī, i.e., whether al-Tirmidhī himself or other writers of his time established it, though *al-Ḥakīm* is recurrently recorded as his title in his works as well as in the subsequent works that mention him.[653] According to a statement of 'Aṭṭār, al-Tirmidhī, as the *ḥakīm* of his people and time, was a competent scholar in every branch of Muslim learning, exoteric as well as esoteric, and his method was based accordingly on reliable traditional epistemological ground. Since he possessed an extraordinary amount of *ḥikmah*, his contemporaries called him "the *ḥakīm* of the saints (*ḥakīm-i awliyā*)".[654] A modern scholarly authority on al-Tirmidhī's works, 'Uthmān Yaḥyā, speculates on the reasons why al-Tirmidhī was singled out with this title among Sufi masters. Yaḥyā lists three probabilities: a) al-Tirmidhī's engagement in studying medicine (*ṭibb*); b) his combining the earliest Islamic spiritual mentality and the intellectual practice of his time; or c) his study of Greek philosophy with a special focus on gnosticism (*'irfān*). Yaḥyā himself believes that the title *Ḥakīm* was ascribed to al-Tirmidhī on the basis of his extraordinary scholarly accomplishment in intellectualizing and theorizing Sufi concepts.[655]

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[652] See, for instance, Massignon, *Essai*, 286-287; Massignon, *Recueil*, 33 and Yves Marquet, "al-Tirmidhī" in *EI²*. Massignon calls al-Tirmidhī "a theoretician" who, throughout his psychological expositions, is inclined towards a kabbala of the letters of scripture. Massignon, *Essai*, 293. In his work, *al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī et le néoplatonisme de son temps*, Marquet examines al-Tirmidhī's ideas against the background of Plato, the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā and al-Farābī's philosophies. He also compares al-Tirmidhī's theories to ancient Greek and Chinese thought. Marquet, *al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī et le néoplatonisme de son temps* (Université de Dakar, 1976).

[653] Al-Ḥusaynī, 'Abd al-Muḥsin, *al-Ma'rifah 'inda al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī* (Cairo, 1968): 31. Radtke asserts that al-Tirmidhī never employs the term "*al-ḥakīm*" with respect to himself. Radtke, "Some Recent Research," 84.

[654] 'Aṭṭār, II: 91.

[655] Editor's introduction to al-Tirmidhī, *Kitāb Khatm al-awliyā'*, 8. Al-Ḥusaynī, for his part, lists four main sources of al-Tirmidhī's arguments: 1) Jewish and Christian heritages (*isrā'īliyyāt*); 2) the Iranian spiritual

In order to give a clearer picture of the matter, I would like to shed some light on al-Tirmidhī's own conception of *ḥikmah*. In his terminology, *ḥikmah* is a distinguishing characteristic of the real friends of God/saints (*awliyā'*) and he designates this *ḥikmah* as *al-ḥikmah al-'ulyā* (the highest or supreme *ḥikmah*) and compares it to the limited (*maḥdūdah*) and restricted (*qāṣirah*) *ḥikmah* possessed by ordinary people. Al-Tirmidhī at times characterizes *al-ḥikmah al-'ulyā* as *al-'ilm al-bāṭin* (esoteric/inward knowledge) and at other times as *'ilm al-anbiyā' wa-al-awliyā'* (knowledge of the prophets and saints), which he considers to be one of the characteristics of the prophets and eminent saints. This kind of *ḥikmah* represents also the inward meaning (*bāṭin*) of the Qur'an, the light of faith (*īmān*) and the delight of gnosis (*bahjat al-'irfān*).[656] Al-Tirmidhī further asserts that *al-ḥikmah al-'ulyā* refers to a very advanced level of knowledge and that it is not given to all saints, but only to the chief ones (*sādāt*) among them. It is also called "the *ḥikmah* of the *ḥikmah* (*ḥikmat al-ḥikmah*)".[657] *Al-ḥikmah al-'ulyā* comprises the principles (*uṣūl*) of *ḥikmah* and embodies the knowledge of the beginning (*'ilm al-bad'*), of the primordial covenant/pact (*'ilm al-mīthāq*), of the measures (*'ilm al-maqādīr*) and of letters (*'ilm al-ḥurūf*). This knowledge is revealed only to the distinguished (*kubarā'*)

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legacy; 3) the Greek heritage; and 4) the Islamic tradition, but with a particularly Shiite tendency. Al-Ḥusaynī, 30-31.

[656] Editor's introduction to al-Tirmidhī, *Kitāb Khatm al-awliyā'*, 111.

[657] Al-Tirmidhī, *Kitāb Khatm al-awliyā'*, 348 and al-Tirmidhī, *Kitāb Sīrat al-awliyā'*, 48. In fact, the two titles, *Khatm al-awliyā'* and *Sīrat al-awliyā'*, refer to the same work by al-Tirmidhī. This work is also known under the title of *'Ilm al-awliyā'*. Massignon, *Essai*, 287. Before Radtke's new edition with a number of new manuscripts, the work was known under the title *Kitāb Khatm al-awliyā'*. According to his own statement, Radtke reedited the work to correct its unclear content and structure as presented by 'Uthmān Yaḥyā. Radtke, "A forerunner of Ibn al-'Arabī: Ḥakīm Tirmidhī on sainthood," *Journal of the Muḥyiddīn Ibn 'Arabī Society* 8 (1989): 43 and Radtke, "Some Recent Research," 44-45.

among the saints and other saints take it from them unquestioningly.[658] On another occasion, al-Tirmidhī uses the term *ḥikmat al-ḥikmah* to explain the Qur'anic notion of "the most firm handle (*al-'urwah al-wuthqā*)" (2:256).[659]

In his work, *Ma'rifat al-asrār*, al-Tirmidhī introduces a gradational definition of the concept of *ḥikmah*. He states that its beginning indicates the acquaintance of the heart with the secrets of God in a state of complete collectedness of speech and act. *Ḥikmah* also means "placing a thing in its [original] place."[660] Al-Tirmidhī asserts that *ḥikmah* has three levels: the first one grows out of much experience (*kathrat al-tajārib*) and is useful in this world; the second one originates from the purity of one's interaction with others (*ṣafā' al-mu'āmalah*) and is beneficial in the Hereafter; and the third, and highest, one emerges out of nearness (*qurb*) to God and witnessing (*mushāhadah*) of Him, and this kind of *ḥikmah* belongs only to those who deserve it.[661]

Al-Tirmidhī uses the word *kays/kiyāsah* (cleverness, intelligence, sagacity or subtlety) apparently in a sense similar to *ḥikmah*. In fact he wrote an epistle, *al-Akyās wa-al-mughtarrūn*, on this concept in which he defines a *kayyis* as an upright, pious, knowledgeable and insightful person as described in a *ḥadīth* saying, "The *kayyis* is the

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[658] Al-Tirmidhī, *Kitāb Khatm al-awliyā'*, 362 (al-Tirmidhī, *Kitāb Sīrat al-awliyā'*, 58.) According to al-Makkī's narration, Yaḥyā b. Mu'ādh asserts that knowledge (*'ilm*) is given through teaching (*ta'līm*), while *ḥikmah* is given through upholding/safeguarding the sanctities of the masters (*bi-ḥifẓ ḥurumāt al-mashāyikh*). Al-Makkī, *'Ilm*, 79-80.

[659] Al-Tirmidhī, *Kitāb Khatm al-awliyā'*, 381.

[660] Al-Tirmidhī, *Kitāb Ma'rifat al-asrār*, ed. Muḥammad Ibrāhīm al-Juyūshī (Egypt, 1977): 70. I should again mention that even though bibliographical sources attribute a work with this title to al-Tirmidhī (see, for instance, Sezgin, I: 658), Radtke also questions the authenticity of this work. Radtke, "Some Recent Research," 41.

[661] Al-Tirmidhī, *Kitāb Ma'rifat al-asrār*, 84-85.

one who humbles his self."[662] Just as in the case of *ḥikmah*, *kiyāsah* is a notion closely related to the concepts of *'aql* and *ma'rifah*. A *kayyis* is supposed to discipline himself against inclinations to the passions of the self and he combines epistemological and practical qualities required to attain a high state and station.[663]

Al-Tirmidhī argues that *ḥikmah* literally means hitting upon the truth (*iṣābat al-ḥaqq*) and that it can be actualized through 1) *'ilm*, 2) *'aql*, 3) something other than these two. This last "something" cannot be merely defined as *kiyāsah*; instead it is *kiyāsah* plus some other heavenly (*ilāhī*) thing which he calls *wilāyah* (sainthood/friendship of God). A *ḥakīm*, in al-Tirmidhī's understanding, is a type of saint (*walī*) who hits upon the truth not only through conventional knowledge and intelligence, but also through a heavenly secret given particularly to him to the exclusion of others. Thus, the words *ḥikmah* and *wilāyah* have very similar connotations for al-Tirmidhī. Consequently, al-Tirmidhī's conception of a *ḥakīm* seems to be the traditional notion of the *ḥakīm* among the Arabs since pre-Islamic times with the addition of the aforementioned heavenly secret ascribed to it.[664]

Throughout his expositions, however, al-Tirmidhī does not hold to the same categorical elucidation of *ḥikmah*. He constantly introduces new categories, apparently depending on the spiritual stational perspective (*maqām*) in question. Al-Tirmidhī himself is aware of this situation in his writings, as he states that he did not compose anything, even a single letter, following conventional methods of writing; rather, he

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[662] Al-Ḥusaynī, 50.

[663] Ibid., 51-53.

[664] Ibid., 33.

asserts, everything he compiled was a result of the moment (*waqt*) that prevailed over him at that time.[665] This fact turns al-Tirmidhī into a figure who does not seem willing to explain Sufi concepts clearly, but instead appears to be intentionally trying to confuse the minds of his readers by throwing terminological sand in their eyes. As a result of this situation, an investigator who attempts to apply conventional analytical scholarly methods to al-Tirmidhī's writings to conceptualize and systematize them finds their author an intimidating elucidator, if not an obscurantist.[666] The level of clarity in his expositions seems to follow a general move from *ẓāhir* to *bāṭin*, but at a certain point along the way, *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin* get mixed, or in other words, they arrive at a point of confluence. Those whose spiritual stage does not go beyond such a point get confused in the face of this situation. In this context, al-Tirmidhī introduces his conception of *ḥikmah*, which he understands as "the core of esoteric knowledge (*lubb al-'ilm al-bāṭin*)" coming from the "ocean of *ma'rifah* (*baḥr al-ma'rifah*)" as opposed to ordinary outward

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[665] Al-Qushayrī, *al-Risalāh*, 24.

[666] In this regard, I unfortunately do not see myself as fortunate as Radtke who says, "Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī's treatise (*Khatm al-awliyā'* or *Sīrat al-awliyā'*) shows a clear structure and a conceptual framework." Radtke blames 'Uthmān Yaḥyā for presenting an unstructured and confused edition of the work, which has been the main reason why this treatise has not been appreciated as a clear Sufi exposition. Radtke, "The concept of *Wilāya*," 486. Radtke severely criticizes Yaḥyā's edition in a very disrespectful manner, to such an extent that he even describes Yaḥyā's work as being based on an "amateurish slipshod method of editing." Radtke, "Some Recent Research," 44-45.
Al-Tirmidhī's constant semantical shifts in meaning can also be observed in his discussions on the categorization of concepts. For instance, he sometimes equates *ma'rifah* with *ḥikmah*, or more properly with *al-ḥikmah al-bālighah* or *al-'ulyā*; at other times, he uses the word *'aql* as a synonym of *ma'rifah*. Al-Ḥusaynī, 55.
Similarly, in his classification of the concept of *'ilm*, al-Tirmidhī argues that there are three kinds of *'ilm*: first, the knowledge of lawful and unlawful things; second, *ḥikmah*; and third, *ma'rifah* which is *al-ḥikmah al-'ulyā*. The first kind of *'ilm*, which is also called *al-'ilm al-ẓāhir* deals with the knowledge of commanded and prohibited things. The second kind of *'ilm*, *ḥikmah*, is the knowledge of *tadbīr* (disposing of affairs) or of the right of God (*'ilm ḥaqq Allāh*); in fact this kind of knowledge is a part or branch (*far'*) of esoteric knowledge. Sometimes al-Tirmidhī uses the terms *ḥaqq*, *'adl* and *ṣidq* to explain these three hierarchical concepts. In this case, *ḥaqq* refers to exoteric knowledge and to the knowledge of *Sharī'ah*, which is concerned with the acts of the limbs. *'Adl* points to the knowledge of *ḥikmah*, of *taṣawwuf*, of *tadbīr* or of *ḥaqq Allāh*, which is based on hearts. *Ṣidq* is the knowledge of *al-ḥikmah al-bālighah*, of *al-ḥikmah al-'ulyā* or of *wilāyah*, which is the real foundation of religion. Al-Ḥusaynī, 66-67.

knowledge (*'ilm*).[667] For him, nevertheless, this *ḥikmah* is the first step in the process of transitioning from *'ilm al-ẓāhir* to *'ilm al-bāṭin* and *ḥikmah* is not equal to *ma'rifah*, but rather is only an initial rank of *ma'rifah*. Being a part of *ma'rifah*, *ḥikmah* is treated as *ma'rifah* in this general terminological sense; not every *ma'rifah*, however, can be termed *ḥikmah* in the proper sense of the word, though the reverse holds true. Unlike *'ilm*, which can be acquired through conventional learning, *ḥikmah* can only be attained as a result of an existential and experiential training of the soul; yet this process does not have a deterministic nature of causality, since *ḥikmah*, in the final analysis, is a heavenly gift.[668] In addition to this basic notion of *ḥikmah*, al-Tirmidhī employs the term *al-ḥikmah al-'ulyā* (the highest or supreme *ḥikmah*) in referring to the knowledge of God and His names.[669] This occurrence indicates that even within the same concept, al-Tirmidhī introduces gradational explanations based on the *maqām* in question. In other words, not only does he define *ḥikmah* variously depending on the context, he also talks about levels of meaning for the concept.

In his exposition of the term *qiyās* (analogy), al-Tirmidhī states that the basic meaning of the root *q-y-s* is bringing the branch (*far'*) of a thing into relationship with its origin (*aṣl*), just like the relationship between a tree and its branches. In al-Tirmidhī's view, therefore, the original meaning of *qiyās* is taking every derived (*far'ī*) thing back to its origin, which is God Who arranges everything in accordance with His perfect/complete/far-reaching *ḥikmah* (*ḥikmah bālighah*). This *ḥikmah* is

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[667] Ibid., 135-136.

[668] Ibid., 136-138.

[669] Ibid., 140.

internal/esoteric, not external/exoteric, and is called such on the basis of the fact that it has reached the knowledge of measurements (*'ilm al-maqādīr*).[670]

In his work on *ḥadīth*, *Nawādir al-uṣūl*, al-Tirmidhī presents a more psychologically-oriented interpretation of the word *ḥakīm* in the prophetic statement, "No one is a *ḥakīm* unless he has experience (*dhū tajribah*), and no one is a man of forbearance (*ḥalīm*) unless he has stumbled (*dhū 'athrah*)."[671] He states that intellect (*'aql*) leads to maturity (*rushd*) and that *ḥikmah* is a light that uncovers the hidden aspects of things. *Ḥikmah*, nevertheless, does not become complete merely by uncovering or obtaining familiarity with itself by means of the heart until the heart becomes acquainted with things through a direct participation of the soul (*nafs*). The heart and soul together verify the result of uncovering and obtaining familiarity and complete the epistemological procedure. A *ḥakīm*, then, is a person for whom the cover has been lifted and who can see the outcomes (*'awāqib*) of things as well as their apparent features. When a *ḥakīm* sees this situation through his organs, this becomes an eyewitnessing (*'iyān*) for him, and he will never forget this knowledge. At the end of such experiences, consequently, *ḥikmah* becomes complete, for before the experience it was an observation by the heart, while now it is an observation by the eye; it was a knowledge of certainty (*'ilm al-yaqīn*) and now it is the eye of certainty or certainty itself (*'ayn al-yaqīn*). And

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[670] Al-Tirmidhī, *al-Furūq wa-man' al-tarāduf*, ed. Muḥammad Ibrāhīm al-Juyūshī (Cairo, 1998): 365.

[671] Al-Tirmidhī, *Nawādir al-uṣūl fī ma'rifat aḥādīth al-rasūl*, ed. Muṣṭafā 'Abd al-Qādir 'Aṭā (Beirut, 1992) II: 26. As far as *ḥalīm* is concerned, al-Tirmidhī says that the notion of *ḥilm* describes a person whose breast is expanded (*munshariḥ ṣadruhu*) as with the Qur'anic cases of Abraham (11:75) and Ismael (37:101). The forbearance of Abraham became extraordinary when he was being Divinely tested regarding the sacrificing of his son Ismael. Similar was the forbearance of Ismael when he obediently and willingly submitted himself to the service of his Lord. Ibid., II: 26-27.

this is the reason why people say, "*'aql* is in accordance with experiences."[672] Given all these discussions on *ḥikmah*, it is evident that in al-Tirmidhī's terminology, *ḥikmah* is a multivalent or polysemous term that contains several meanings as well as levels of meaning.

As far as his writings in *Bayān al-farq* are concerned, al-Tirmidhī uses the term *ḥakīm* for both philosophers[673] and Sufis[674] – even for the Qur'anic Luqmān.[675] Moreover, historically, it was in the tradition of the Eastern provinces of the Muslim lands, in Khorasan and in Transoxania, that Sufis were for a long time called *ḥakīm* (pl. *ḥukamā'*) as well as *'ārif* (pl. *'ārifūn*).[676] At the same time, as I have noted before, the terms *ḥikmah* and *ḥakīm* are very frequently used Qur'anic concepts, "*Ḥakim*" itself being one of the ninety-nine Most Beautiful Names of God. Accordingly, the titles of many subsequent works contain derivatives of this very word, including Ibn al-'Arabī's (d. 638/1240) *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* and Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh's (d. 709/1309) *Kitāb al-ḥikam*. Throughout his *Kitāb al-ṣidq*, Abū Sa'īd al-Kharrāz (d. 286/899), a contemporary of al-Tirmidhī, uses the term *ḥukamā'* to refer exclusively to Sufis.[677] Given such considerations, it seems to me that his title *Ḥakīm*, does not conclusively establish that al-Tirmidhī's explanations stem from philosophical origins. Instead, I would understand

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[672] Ibid., II, 27.

[673] Al-Tirmidhī, *Bayān al-farq bayn al-ṣadr wa-al-qalb wa-al-fu'ād wa-al-lubb*, ed. Nicholas Heer (Cairo, 1958): 75. Later on, Heer translated and puplished this study, which was originally his doctoral dissertation. "A treatise on the heart" in *Three early Sufi texts: al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī and Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī al-Naysabūrī*, trans. Nicholas Heer and Kenneth L. Honerkamp (Louisville, 2003).

[674] Al-Tirmidhī, *Bayān al-farq*, 52, 79.

[675] Ibid., 77.

[676] See for instance, Massignon [Radtke], "Taṣawwuf" in *EI²*.

[677] See for instance, al-Kharrāz, 61, 71, 73, 93, 106, 115, 121 and 142.

this title as basically meaning "sage", from which the other usages – including Sufi, philosopher, physician and scientist – are derived.[678] At the same time, however, I should admit that al-Tirmidhī's style throughout his works reveals that he was well acquainted with philosophical and even alchemical notions, on account of which he is regarded by certain scholars as the founder of an early theosophical system in the Sufi tradition.[679]

Similar to al-Nūrī's case, throughout his categorical expositions in *Bayān al-farq*, al-Tirmidhī relies primarily on Qur'anic and Prophetic statements. He offers several symbolizations to characterize the relationship between the four concentric parts of the heart and states that each one of these *maqāmāt* is also connected to one of the four Divine lights: the *ṣadr* is the first and outward *maqām* of the heart and is connected to the light of *islām*; the second *maqām*, the *qalb*, is the internal part of the *ṣadr* and is connected to the light of *īmān*; the *fu'ād* and *lubb* are the third and fourth *maqāmāt* and they are connected to the lights of *ma'rifah* and *tawḥīd*, respectively. On account of man's spiritual ranking, these four *maqāmāt* are represented by the *muslim*, *mu'min*, *'ārif* and *muwaḥḥid* according to the same order. At the same time, these four *maqāmāt* correspond to the four Qur'anic concepts pertaining to states of the soul (*ḥālāt al-nafs*): the soul that inspires evil (*al-nafs al-ammārah bi-al-sū'*),[680] the blaming or reproachful

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[678] I should mention that my discussions with my teacher and academic advisor Wolfhart Heinrichs on the concept of *ḥikmah* have helped me immensely in arriving at this conclusion.

[679] Massignon, "Taṣawwuf" in *EI²*. Radtke further notes that the *laqab* "*al-ḥakīm*" was commonly used among the Sufis of the city of Balkh, which neighbors Tirmidh, with the result that associating certain Sufi notions with Neo-Platonic or Gnostic conceptual systems is not a plausible argument. In Radtke's view, *ḥakīm* in this historical context refers to someone who seeks God and strives after knowledge of nature and the soul. Radtke, "Some Recent Research," 84-86. In fact Radtke defines *ḥakīm* in the case of al-Tirmidhī as a "theosophist", who would seek wisdom and advanced mystical knowledge through his own inner experience instead of through the conventional philosophical methods of acquiring knowledge in his age. Bernd Radtke and John O'Kane, *The concept of sainthood in early Islamic mysticism: two works by al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī* (London, 1996): 5-6.

[680] "Yet I do not claim that my soul is innocent, the soul is certainly prone to evil" (12: 53).

soul (*al-nafs al-lawwāmah*),[681] the inspiring soul (*al-nafs al-mulhimah*)[682] and the soul at peace (*al-nafs al-muṭma'innah*),[683] respectively.[684] Thus al-Tirmidhī argues that the *qalb* is a general term containing these four inner *maqāmāt*, and that each one of these internal *maqāmāt* bears an exclusive significance which is irreducible to the other, as each one has its own functions and characterizations.[685]

Al-Tirmidhī uses images to illustrate the four concentric circles of these *maqāmāt*; for instance, he compares the *maqāmāt* to the parts of a homestead (*dār*) and to the sacred precincts around Mecca (*ḥaram*). In fact, each part of this homestead fulfills particular functions in domestic life. Similarly, the general term *maqāmāt al-qulūb* resembles the *ḥaram*, which roughly refers to the Meccan territories – including the city of Mecca (*balad*), the Mosque (*masjid*), and the Ka'ba (*al-bayt al-'atīq*)[686] – yet each of

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[681] "Nay! I swear by the blaming soul" (75: 2).

[682] "By the soul and Him that formed it, then inspired it with iniquity and piety" (91: 7-8).

[683] "O soul at peace! Return to your Lord, well-pleased and well-pleasing" (89: 27-28).

[684] Al-Tirmidhī, *Bayān al-farq*, 28-29.

[685] Ibid., 33.

[686] The Ka'ba motif is also employed by the *Shaykh al-Akbar*, Ibn al-'Arabī, when he elaborates his understanding of the heart. In his work, *Khatm al-awliyā'*, al-Tirmidhī poses a list of questions (157 in number) which could only be answered by the distinguished saints. Al-Tirmidhī, *Kitāb Khatm al-awliyā'*, 142-326. Ibn al-'Arabī was the first and only person to respond to this challenge. He wrote a treatise, *Jawāb al-mustaqīm*, and later incorporated its expanded version into his *Magnum Opus, al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*. Ibn al-'Arabī, *Futūhāt al-Makkiyyah*, ed. Aḥmad Shams al-Dīn (Beirut, 1999) III: 61-.207.
In his work, *al-Masā'il al-maknūnah*, al-Tirmidhī states that God created a piece of organ inside the human being which is called *qalb* because of its fluctuating nature. God appointed the *qalb* as the leader over the other organs (*jawāriḥ*) and placed the knowledge of Himself in this *qalb*. He entrusted to the *qalb* the safeguarding of the other organs and entrusted man in turn with being responsible for safeguarding the *qalb*. God is the Cause of Fluctuation (*muqallib*) of hearts in accordance with His will. He empowered man with intellect (*'aql*) and placed the knowledge of Himself in this *'aql*. There is an interior part of the *'aql* that God made a seat for the passions (*shahawāt*) and in which He placed the desire for this-worldly things. God gave authority to caprice (*hawā*), in which he placed the darkness of ignorance of Himself, over this *shahwah* as well. Through that which is placed in it regarding the knowledge of God, the *'aql* directs the *qalb* towards God, while *hawā* calls the soul/self/ego (*nafs*) towards ephemeral desires (*shahawāt fāniyah*). In reality, al-Tirmidhī argues, *'aql* and *hawā* are two spirits (*rūḥān*) and in each there

is a life (*ḥayāh*); one is heavenly (*samāwiyyah*) and the other earthly (*arḍiyyah*). The first is called *rūḥ* and the second *nafs*. *Rūḥ* resides in the head and from thence spreads throughout the whole body, while *nafs* resides in the belly (*baṭn*), from thence it likewise spreads throughout the whole body. During sleep, the *nafs* goes out of the body and ascends to God, but the *rūḥ* remains in the heart. Al-Tirmidhī asserts that the *qalb* contains four lights: the light of *ma'rifah*, of *'ilm*, of *'aql* and of life (*ḥayāh*) through God. The first three lights in fact function by means of the light of life through God. Al-Tirmidhī, *al-Masā'il al-maknūnah*, ed. Muḥammad Ibrāhīm al-Juyūshī (Cairo, 1980): 58-59. To underline the central position of the *'aql* during this subtle psychological process, al-Tirmidhī refers to a *ḥadīth* in which the Prophet states, "God created the *'aql* and and then addressed it, 'By My Glory, I have not created anything that is dearer to Me than you.'" Ibid., 69.

According to al-Tirmidhī's deep psychological analysis, when God wills something to happen, the *qalb* of an obedient servant goes along willingly with that will and the will of the *nafs* disappears for the sake of God's will. This person finds a love for his Lord in his *qalb*, in which joy/gladness (*faraḥ*), sweetness (*ḥalāwah*) and life (*ḥayāh*) exist for him, as opposed to the will of the *nafs*. In the process of making a decision regarding an action, there is a fight (*mujāhadah*) between the *nafs* and the *qalb*. The *qalb* is inclined to please God and love for Him, while the *nasf* is inclined to the joys of passions (*shahawāt*) and love for them. *'Aql*, *'ilm*, *ma'rifah*, understanding (*fahm*), cleverness/adroitness (*kiyāsah*), perspicacity (*fiṭnah*) and mind (*dhihn*) are of the soldiers (*junūd*) of the *qalb*, while caprice (*hawā*) for *shahawāt*, joys (*afrāḥ*) and ornament (*zīnah*) are of the soldiers of the *nafs*. If a person deserts the battlefield, this action results in letting the *nafs* dominate, beat and enslave the *qalb* and thus the *qalb* loses its power over controlling that person's life. If, however, he fights together with the *qalb* until the *nafs* becomes a slave, the *qalb* determines the things to be done or not to be done (60-62). In the final analysis, as al-Tirmidhī states, *ma'rifah*, *'ilm*, *fahm*, *dhihn* and *ḥifẓ* (memory) function under the decree of God. They are things placed within man and when the persmission of God comes, they all become causative agents/motive powers (*'awāmil*); if the permission does not come, they simply remain in their (celestial) forms (*hay'āt*). This is the case mentioned in the Qur'an regarding the relationship between the heart and faith, "Those upon whose hearts God has written faith" (58:22) (95).

Al-Tirmidhī further asserts that *hawā* stimulates *shahawāt*, while *'aql* stimulates *'ulūm* and *ma'rifah* (65). According to his explanations, even though the *qalb* is the emir of the other organs, when *ma'rifah* controls the *qalb*, *'aql* is on the right path (*istaqāma*), but when caprice (*hawā*) controls the *qalb*, the self/soul/ego (*nafs*) deviates from God. The relationship between *ma'rifah* and *'aql* is thus comparable to the one between *nafs* and *hawā* (153).

According to al-Sulamī's records from earlier authorities, with respect to listening to *ḥikmah* people may be categorized into two groups, intelligent (*'āqil*) and [exoterically-minded] performer (*'āmil*): in reaction to his listening to *ḥikmah*, the *'āqil* stands amazed (*yata'ajjab*), while the *'āmil* fluctuates (*yataqallab*); like a snake, his heart gets twisted (*yaltawī*). Al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 218.

Ibn al-'Arabī also talks about the fluctuating nature of the *qalb*. According to his explanations, in its verbal noun form, the word *qalb* is almost synonymous with *taqallub* (alteration, fluctuation). In this sense, relying on various Prophetic statements including, "The hearts of all the children of Adam are like a single heart between two of the fingers of the All-merciful. He turns (*taṣrīf*) it however He desires. O God, O Turner of Hearts, turn our hearts toward obeying Thee!" Ibn al-'Arabī designates *qalb* as a place of constant change and fluctuation. Similarly, in many *aḥādīth*, God is called the "Turner of hearts (*Muṣarrif al-qulūb*)" or "He who makes hearts fluctuate (*Muqallib al-qulūb*)". Chittick, 106. Ibn al-'Arabī considers the heart as an epistemological seat rather than merely a source of emotions, for the Qur'an repeatedly speaks of the heart as a locus for understanding and intelligence. In this context, he compares the heart to the Ka'ba. Furthermore, on the basis of a frequently quoted *ḥadīth qudsī*, "My earth and My heaven embrace Me not, but the heart of My believing servant embraces Me", Ibn al-'Arabī describes the heart as the Throne of God (*al-'arsh*) in the microcosm, namely in man. Due to such Divine connections, the heart possesses astonishing capacity (*wus'*) and its exclusive characteristics may only be comparable to another heavenly concept, knowledge, as indicated in the Qur'an on the tongues of angels, "Our Lord, You embrace all things in mercy and knowledge" (40: 7). Chittick, 107.

In Ibn al-'Arabī's view, this immense capacity of the heart enables it to go beyond all limitations (*taqyīd*) to the extent that the heart becomes a touchstone for the knowledge of all things, even the knowledge of God. As for man's rational faculty (*'aql*), it is subject to constant limitations and incapabilities. In this context, Ibn al-'Arabī calls attention to the semantic connection between "*'aql*" and "*'iqāl*" (fetter), the latter being

these places requires specific rituals (*manāsik*).[687] Likewise, and in accordance with Qur'anic testimony, "We have raised some of them above others in rank" (43: 32) and "Over every man of knowledge is one who knows better" (12: 76), al-Tirmidhī asserts that the members of this religion differ from one another in rank. This ranking takes place in the *qalb*, while in the eyes of ordinary people, the term *qalb* can be used interchangeably for each of these four *maqāmāt*.[688]

Al-Tirmidhī continues his elaboration, saying that the *ṣadr-qalb* relationship resembles the courtyard-homestead (*ṣaḥn-dār*) relationship; it is also similar to the situation of the sacred area that surrounds Mecca. The *ṣadr* is the place where devilish insinuations (*wasāwis*) and afflictions wander about, just as wood and trash can be found in the courtyard of a homestead, and beasts may enter into the open space of the *ḥaram*. This *ṣadr* is subject to the influences of this-worldly desires and needs. The *ṣadr* sometimes constricts/contracts and sometimes dilates/expands, and it is ruled by *al-nafs al-ammārah bi-al-sū'*. At the same time, it is the seat of the light of *islām*, and the place where regular knowledge based on customary learning takes place. It is called *ṣadr*, for it is the forepart (*ṣadr*) of the heart, just as the *ṣadr* of the day is its beginning and the courtyard (*ṣaḥn*) is the front part of a homestead.[689]

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used to hobble a camel. Likewise, despite all its striving, *'aql* is not capable of understanding God, while the heart alone "is able to perceive God's self-disclosures through the faculty of imagination." Chittick, 107.
On a more general epistemological plane, Ibn al-'Arabī asserts that knowledge can be acquired in three ways: reflection, unveiling and scripture. The *nafs*, which is a subtle human entity, attains knowledge through reflection, and the mode of its knowing is called "reason" (*'aql*). When it knows through God, the mode of knowing is designated as "heart" (*qalb*), which is contrasted with reason (*'aql*). Chittick, 159.

[687] Al-Tirmidhī, *Bayān al-farq*, 33-34.

[688] Ibid., 34.

[689] Ibid., 35-36.

Al-Tirmidhī further articulates his ideas arguing that every conventional learning activity takes place within the *ṣadr*, but that its fruits are subject to forgetfulness (*nisyān*). In this context, the *ṣadr* is an arena where incorrectness, imperfections and doubts roam about. This process of acquiring conventional knowledge resembles the position of a pearl in the oyster, for it is possible that alongside the pearl, other things – such as water – may penetrate into the oyster, yet finally they go out and only the pearl remains as the permanent resident there. Thus, al-Tirmidhī asserts, human knowledge based on routine learning resembles the things in the oyster other than the pearl. Such knowledge is subject to erosion and disappearance. Religious blindness and sight are, therefore, connected with the *qalb*, not with the *ṣadr*, for the Qur'an indicates, "Indeed the eyes (*abṣār*) do not become blind, but rather do the hearts (*qulūb*) within the breasts (*ṣudūr*) become blind" (22: 46).[690]

As for the second *maqām*, *qalb*, al-Tirmidhī states that it is the inner part of the *ṣadr*, like the city of Mecca that is inside the *ḥaram*, and the house (*bayt*) is included in the homestead (*dār*). This *qalb* is the seat of the light of *īmān*; and the lights of *khushū'* (submissiveness), *taqwā* (God-fearingness/God-consciousness), *maḥabbah* (love), *riḍā* (contentment), *yaqīn* (certainty), *khawf* (fear of God), *rajā'* (hope), *ṣabr* (patience) and *qanā'ah* (contentment or satisfaction) also reside in the *qalb*. Furthermore, the *qalb* is the origin of the principles of knowledge, for it is like a spring of water, while the *ṣadr* is like a pond. Knowledge then arises from the *qalb* itself, while the *ṣadr* can receive it only through regular learning; thus the *qalb* is the principle (*aṣl*), while the *ṣadr* is only a branch (*far'*); the *qalb* resembles the king, while the *ṣadr* only a kingdom. From the *qalb*

[690] Ibid., 46-47.

emerges certainty (*yaqīn*), knowledge (*'ilm*) and intention (*niyyah*) for which the Prophet declared, "Indeed, deeds are according to intentions."[691] The Prophet explained that the soundness of other bodily organs is dependent on the soundness of the *qalb* and that their corruption leads to the corruption of the *qalb*. Al-Tirmidhī concludes that religious responsibility (*taklīf*) is based on the inner stirrings and deeds of this *qalb*, for the Qur'an indicates, "God will call you to account for what your hearts have earned" (2: 225).[692]

According to al-Tirmidhī's elaborations, the *ṣadr* is the seat of conceptual or expressible knowledge (*'ilm al-'ibārah*), while the *qalb* is the seat of the knowledge embedded under the *'ilm al-'ibārah,* which is known as the knowledge of *ḥikmah* and allusions (*'ilm al-ḥikmah wa-al-ishārah*). The *'ilm al-'ibārah* is the proof of God to his creatures on the basis of which they are to improve themselves in practice of that knowledge, while the *'ilm al-ishārah* is a path leading to Himself by means of His guidance.[693]

In al-Tirmidhī's view, the third *maqām* of the heart, the *fu'ād*, resembles the Sacred Mosque in Mecca, and corresponds to a closet (*makhda'*) or storeroom (*khizānah*) in a house. This *fu'ād* is the seat of *ma'rifah*, as well as of incoming thoughts (*khawāṭir*) and the vision of God (*ru'yah*). A man first benefits from his *fu'ād*, then from his *qalb*, then from his *ṣadr*. The *fu'ād* is situated at the center of the *qalb*, just as the *qalb* itself is embedded in the middle of the *ṣadr* and the pearl (*lu'lu'*) is located within the oyster (*ṣadaf*).[694] The Qur'an itself describes the *fu'ād* as the seat of vision (*ru'yah*) saying,

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[691] Ibid., 36-37.

[692] Ibid., 37.

[693] Ibid., 58.

[694] Ibid., 38.

"The *fu'ād* lied not (in seeing) what it saw" (53: 41). Thus, al-Tirmidhī argues, the *fu'ād* benefits from the *ru'yah*, while the *qalb* enjoys *'ilm*; but as long as the *fu'ād* does not see, the *qalb* cannot benefit from *'ilm* either. In this context al-Tirmidhī refers to the famous *ḥadīth* of Gabriel in which the Prophet explains the concept of *iḥsān* (virtue, good-doing, or excellence) as worshipping God as if one saw Him, for even if a servant does not see Him, He nevertheless sees that servant.[695]

According to al-Tirmidhī's writings, although *fu'ād* and *qalb* have very similar connotations, *fu'ād* has a subtler meaning than *qalb*. During the process of attaining knowledge, the *qalb* needs to be strengthened (*rabṭ*)[696] by the light of *tawḥīd* so that it can acquire knowledge, while the *fu'ād* does not need any external support as it can see and observe directly. Therefore, the superiority of the *fu'ād* over the *qalb* emerges as the Prophetic statement indicates, "A report (*khabar*) is not like seeing/vision (*mu'āyanah*)."[697]

Al-Tirmidhī symbolizes the *lubb*, the fourth *maqām*, within the *fu'ād* by the faculty of vision or sight (*baṣar*) within the eye. This is the *maqām* of the unity beyond all diversities, for in reality, the lights of religion (*anwār al-dīn*) and the religion itself are

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[695] Ibid., 68. In his treatment of *qalb*, al-Sarrāj calls attention to the limitations of *qalb*. He severely criticizes the argument presented by a group of people who claim that God can be seen in this world by means of the *qalb*. He asserts that the sight of the heart to which the Sufis allude refers in fact to confirmation (*taṣdīq*), the witnessing of *īmān*, and the reality of certainty (*ḥaqīqat al-yaqīn*), rather than physically seeing God Himself. According to al-Sarrāj's statements, such an assumption is a subtle devilish trick on the path of the spiritual journey, for everthing that can be seen in this world is a created thing. For him, the sight of the heart must be understood in light of the Prophetic statement, "Worship God as if you saw Him, for even though you do not see Him, He [certainly] sees you." Al-Sarrāj, 544-545.

[696] "And We strengthened their hearts" (18: 14).

[697] Al-Tirmidhī, *Bayān al-farq*, 69-70.

one, though spiritual ranking among the members of the religion may vary. Thus the *lubb* is the seat of the light of *tawḥīd*, which is the most perfect light.[698]

Al-Tirmidhī argues that the *lubb* is a permanent, as well as the purest, *maqām* of the *qalb*. All lights reach and establish their perfections in the *lubb*, which is the seat of the light of *tawḥīd*. The *lubb* is the *'aql* planted (*'aql maghrūs*) in the land of *tawḥīd*, and it attains certainty (*yaqīn*) in knowledge in a direct manner. In the *maqām* of *lubb*, the *nafs* discards all its lower characteristics and reaches its perfection. Only the people of faith (*ahl al-īmān*) can have enjoyment of the *lubb* and they are the elect (*khaṣṣ*) servants of the Merciful (*Raḥmān*); they observe the Divine instructions, and turn away from the *nafs* and this world. In return, God has dressed them in the robe of God-fearingness/God-consciousness (*libās al-taqwā*) and protected them from all sorts of affliction. God has called them men of understanding (*ulū al-albāb*) and singled them out with His address (*khiṭāb*). The Qur'an admonishes the men of understanding in various ways and praises their characteristics in many passages at the same time.[699] It also recurrently describes their privileged position in terms of spiritual ranking, intimacy with their Lord, profound comprehension, and their merits with respect to their understanding and forbearance. God has favored them exclusively with the light of *lubb*.[700]

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[698] Ibid., 38.

[699] For example, "So fear God, O men of understanding"; (5:100) "Those are the ones whom God has guided, so follow their guidance"; (6:90) "Whoever is given *ḥikmah* has indeed been given much good; yet none remember except men of understanding"; (2:269) "...and that they may know that He is but one God and that the men of understanding may remember;" (14:52) and "...and that they might reflect upon its verses and that men of understanding may remember". (38:29). Al-Tirmidhī, *Bayān al-farq*, 73.

[700] Ibid., 70-73. In his work, *al-Masā'il al-maknūnah*, al-Tirmidhī further explains this point saying that God helps men of *tawḥīd* (*muwaḥḥidūn*) through the light of *ma'rifah*, which is the light of unification (*tawḥīd*) coming from Unity (*aḥadiyyah*), so that they would declare His Unity. Then their hearts do not get cut off from this light and the caprice of polytheism (*shirk*) disappears as the Qur'an states, "God has endeared faith to you and beautified it in your hearts." (49:7) Al-Tirmidhī, *al-Masā'il al-maknūnah* , 68.

Al-Tirmidhī further points out that in the eyes of language experts/lexicographers (*ahl al-adab wa-man lahum ma'rifah bi-shay' min al-lughah*), *lubb* simply means *'aql*. He argues that, in fact, the two terms bear different meanings. He illustrates the difference between *lubb* and *'aql* by the lights of the sun and a lamp (*sirāj*), respectively, arguing that even though both the sun and the lamp provide light, the difference between their lights is obvious. Likewise, for him, the ranking of *'aql* subtly differs depending on its bearer, because the *'aql* itself comprises various *maqāmāt*. The first *maqām* of the *'aql* is the primordial nature of *'aql* or innate reason (*'aql al-fiṭrah*) which distinguishes child and man from those who suffer insanity (*junūn*). By means of this faculty, man differentiates good from evil, near from far, and the like. This *'aql* is also the basis of man's responsibility for his actions. The second kind of *'aql* is the *'aql* of argumentation (*'aql al-ḥujjah*) on the basis of which God addresses mankind. When a person attains forbearance (*ḥilm*), the light of support (*nūr al-ta'yīd*) lends help to the light of reason (*nūr al-'aql*) and he attains God's address (*khiṭāb*). The third kind of *'aql* is the *'aql* of experience (*'aql al-tajribah*) which is the most beneficial and excellent of the three, as it is by means of such experience that a servant becomes a *ḥakīm*. Al-Tirmidhī asserts that epistemologically this kind of *'aql* empowers its holder to go beyond the phenomenal causality of creation. As noted above, the Prophet referred to this *'aql* in his statement, "No one is a *ḥakīm* unless he has experience (*dhū tajribah*), and no one is a man of forbearance (*ḥalīm*) unless he has stumbled (*dhū 'athrah*)."[701] The fourth kind of *'aql* is inherited (*mawrūth*) *'aql*, which, depending on God's decree, can be inherited from an intelligent, *ḥakīm*, knowledgeable, insightful and dignified person by another, ordinary

[701] Al-Tirmidhī, *Bayān al-farq*, 73-74.

one. This is a result of God's unparalleled grace and mercy. Al-Tirmidhī concludes that in accordance with the portion they enjoy of these four kinds of *'aql*, people can benefit from them and serve other people. In al-Tirmidhī's view, it is possible that some unbelievers, such as philosophers (*falāsifah*) and Indian and Greek intellectuals (*ḥukamā'*), enjoy the aforementioned aspects of *'aql*, since they can be obtained through personal intellectual efforts as well as through social interactions. But there is another distinctive kind of *'aql*, called balanced *'aql* (*al-'aql al-mawzūn*), which is the most beneficial of all five of these "kinds", or *maqāmāt*, of *'aql*. This *'aql* is imprinted with the light of God's guidance and is the *lubb* in al-Tirmidhī's terminology; it is also called *'aql* but only as a linguistic convention. Although in general terms, the *lubb* is also called *'aql*, its epistemological horizon goes far beyond the limits of ordinary *'aql*, because the *ulū al-albāb* attain knowledge of God (*'ulamā' bi-Allāh*). Every *dhū lubb* is simultaneously an *'āqil*, but not every *'āqil* is *dhū lubb*, for the Qur'an explains, "But none will grasp their meaning save the knowers" (29: 43). The *'aql* has other names like *ḥilm*, *nuhā*,[702] *ḥijr*,[703] and *ḥijā*; but the name *'aql* is the most common name for this human faculty. Lexicographically, al-Tirmidhī calls attention to the semantic relationship between the words *'aql* and *'iqāl* (hobble or fetter), for both function to take control of man and animals against the natural inclination to follow passions and to go towards pastures, respectively. This meaning is apparent in verse 16:7, "Surely in that is a sign for a people who reflect (*ya'qilūn*)"; for such a reflection leads people to take a balanced, secure position between the commands and prohibitions of God. Al-Tirmidhī once again

[702] "Surely in this there are signs for men of intelligence (*li-ulī al-nuhā*)" (20:54 and 128).

[703] "There surely is an oath for thinking man (*li-dhī ḥijr*)" (89: 5).

remarks that in the final analysis, enjoying the *lubb* is a matter of Divine grace and blessing.[704]

In the context of *'aql* and *lubb*, al-Tirmidhī examines another epistemological concept, that of *fiqh*. He argues that beyond its usage in the field of jurisprudence, the term *fiqh* refers to attaining a real comprehension in knowledge, and the act of *fiqh* is accomplished primarily by the *qalb*. The heart of a *faqīh* is illuminated by Divine light, and the act of *fiqh* is originally one of the exclusive characteristics of a *mu'min*, as the Qur'an indicates, "Yet the hypocrites do not comprehend (*lā yafqahūn*)" (63:7). The Prophet acknowledged the merit of this kind of *fiqh* in his statement,

> If God wills good for a servant, He gives him comprehension in religion (*yufaqqihhu fī al-dīn*) and shows him the faults of his self (*nafs*) as well as the affliction of this world and its remedy.[705]

At the same time, al-Tirmidhī underlines that the extent of spiritual knowledge differs according to the maturity and strength of the person. The secrets imparted by the light of *tawḥīd* constitute an immense burden for the human being. In the course of the spiritual journey, the meaning and experience of this-worldly concepts may differ according to the ontological states of their manifestations; for example, a wayfarer may feel himself both sated with drink and thirsty, both seeing and blind, both learned and ignorant, at one and the same time. The ones who witness these spiritual realities,

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[704] Al-Tirmidhī, *Bayān al-farq*, 75-77.

[705] Ibid., 77-78. On a more epistemological plane, al-Tirmidhī distinguishes five components of intelligence: intelligence proper (*dhihn*), the faculty of memory (*ḥifẓ*), understanding (*fahm*), penetration of spirit or sharp-wittedness (*dhakā'*) and knowledge (the immediate perceptions of awareness) (*'ilm*). For him, at the beginning of the creation, all these faculties were established by God in man's primordial nature (*fiṭrah*). Through this process, man is expected to attain true knowledge. In al-Tirmidhī's view, an ordinary believer who has already acquired a proper awareness of the exterior world will soon be interested in a higher level of awareness. By means of Divine guidance, he gradually ascends towards the Divine Unity and awareness of God. Hence, human reason establishes the basis of faith, but above the "reason of faith" there are the "reason of knowledge and of perception (*idrāk*)", the "reason of right guidance (*hidāyah*)" and the "reason of gnosis and of insight (*baṣīrah*)." Marquet, "al-Tirmidhī" in *EI²*.

nevertheless, must observe this-worldly rules and regulations, and they must not divulge these secrets improperly.[706] Al-Tirmidhī notes that concealing these secrets while sustaining an ordinary human life in this world is an extremely difficult accomplishment. That was the reason why the Prophet Muḥammad said, "If you knew what I know, you would laugh little and weep much, and pour dust upon your heads";[707] and "The prophets are tested under the most difficult conditions and then those most like them".[708] Al-Tirmidhī concludes that the knowledge revealed through the lights of *tawḥīd* cannot merely be understood by means of reasoning (*naẓar*) and analogy/logic (*qiyās*).[709]

Al-Tirmidhī believes that in its authentic nature, *'aql* does not deny religious notions, including the Prophet Muḥammad's ascension to the Heavens (*Mi'rāj*) and the miracles of the friends of God (*karamāt al-awliyā'*), as claimed by some. In his view, they think that because of the irrational character of such notions, these ideas are basically irreconcilable with their *'aql*. Thus, they maintain that what is not admissible to the *'aql* in this rational sense is simply invalid (*bāṭil*). Al-Tirmidhī criticizes this argument and asserts that what they call *'aql* is originally a created and composed faculty. *'Aql* understood according to this notion is not capable of attaining true knowledge of God, for it is subject to constant changes such as increase and decrease, which show its imperfection. Such changes and imperfections disqualify this *'aql* to

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[706] Al-Tirmidhī, *Bayān al-farq*, 87-89.

[707] Ibid., 90.

[708] Ibid., 90. 'Aṭṭār records that Abū Sa'īd al-Kharrāz intentionally preferred being remote from God over being close to Him, because al-Kharrāz thought that he could not withstand closeness to God. In this context, al-Kharrāz mentions Luqmān's saying, "I was given the choice between *ḥikmah* and prophethood. I choose *ḥikmah*, because I could not support the burden of prophethood." 'Aṭṭār, II: 41.

[709] Al-Tirmidhī, *Bayān al-farq*, 91.

operate in the Divine, eternal domain. Rather, al-Tirmidhī argues, the *'aql* is a created thing and a composed means to sustain servanthood (*'ubūdiyyah*); it is incapable of understanding the reality of Lordship (*rubūbiyyah*). Hence, whoever fails to understand his own created nature cannot attain the knowledge of the reality of things, and his explanations are simply based on his suppositions (*ẓann*) and fantasy (*khayāl*). According to al-Tirmidhī, the explanations pertaining to the reality of things must rely on the process during which man submissively returns to the path of God. Only then can a man humble his self and purify his heart properly so that his heart may become like a mirror to reflect his authentic existence, and thus he may attain knowledge of God as the Qur'an and the Prophet underline, "... in your selves; can you not see?" (51:21) and "He who knows himself knows his Lord", respectively. In al-Tirmidhī's statements, this process establishes only the introductory phase of the spiritual journey to attain the light of Truth (*nūr al-ḥaqq*) and the knowledge of Divine mysteries.[710]

Al-Tirmidhī symbolizes the relationship between the *ṣadr*, *qalb*, *fu'ād* and *lubb* with the image of a man in a dark house in the middle of the night. He is first given a lamp to benefit from its light; next, a small window and the door of the house are opened for him so that he can benefit from the moonlight. When he becomes familiar with the brightness of the moonlight, he goes out to enjoy its light more, leaving aside the lamp. While he is delighted with his enjoyment of the moonlight, towards the end of the night, the sun comes at dawn, and its rays outshine the moonlight; ultimately it reaches its zenith and brightest light. Likewise, al-Tirmidhī compares the dark house to an ignorant self (*al-nafs al-jāhilah*) in its deep darkness; he compares the lamp to the light of *'aql*

[710] Ibid., 92-94.

(*nūr al-'aql*) in the self which in time increases by means of the lights of *Sharī'ah* and *Sunnah*, a scene that is comparable to the rising of the moon. Then, through the process of purification by the light of *ma'rifah* – which is comparable to the appearance of the morning – the *'aql* continues its journey to improve and perfect its enlightenment; and thus the Divine secrets are revealed to that enlightened *'aql*. Finally, this *'aql* attains the light of *tawḥīd* – which is comparable to the rising of the sun – and the Divine secrets unfold before its eyes and the *'aql* becomes a witness to the realities of the Divine attributes and names. When such a man attains this perfect *maqām*, his main concern becomes to keep himself at this *maqām*, and not to lose this profound pleasure. His fear of losing the Divine lights goes far beyond a person's (would-be) fear of losing the light of the sun.[711]

Al-Tirmidhī asserts that beyond this point there are other subtle stations (*maqāmāt laṭīfah*), but the origin of all of them is still the light of *tawḥīd*; for *tawḥīd* is a secret (*sirr*) and *ma'rifah* is a benefaction (*birr*). *Īmān* is the safeguarding of the *sirr* and witnessing of the *birr*; *islām* is a thankfulness (*shukr*) for the *birr* and a submission of the heart to the *sirr*. For, *tawḥīd* is a *sirr* to which God guides His servants who cannot comprehend it with their *'aql* without God's support and guidance. The case of *ma'rifah* is similar: *ma'rifah* is the *birr* by God through which an *'ārif* believes that all things come from Him. This means witnessing God's *birr* and safeguarding His *sirr*, because he cannot understand the real nature (*kayfiyyah*) of His Lordship (*rubūbiyyah*). He merely knows that He is One and refrains from anthropomorphism (*tashbīh*) and denial of His attributes (*ta'ṭīl*). It is *īmān* that witnesses the *birr* and safeguards the *sirr*. As for

[711] Ibid., 97-98.

islām, it is the directing of the self (*nafs*) towards God's *birr* through obedience, thankfulness and submissiveness to Him, for *islām* is practiced only through the *nafs* and the *nafs* itself is blind to the comprehension of the Real/Truth (*ḥaqq*) and to witnessing Him. This very *nafs* is not responsible for knowing realities, because *īmān* is prescribed on the basis of the *qalb*. Therefore the *nafs*, without understanding the real nature of the realities, can only embrace and follow Divine prescriptions.[712]

According to al-Tirmidhī's explanations, the unspeakable or ineffable stations (*al-maqāmāt al-maskūt 'an-hā*), which lie beyond the four *maqāmāt* mentioned above, are grasped by a servant of God who has been Divinely assisted to understand the four *maqāmāt* in accordance with the manner in which they are described. Only then can such a servant gain access to the knowledge of those ineffable stations.[713] In al-Tirmidhī's view, the subtle peculiarities of such psychological states, as occur in the cases of the differences between *qalb* and *fu'ād* and between *rūḥ* and *nafs*, can be understood properly only by the elect of scholars (*khaṣṣ al-'ulamā'*), who are the *ḥukamā'*, not the scholars of the *ẓāhir*.[714]

In al-Tirmidhī's view also, not every kind of mental activity deserves to be called knowledge (*'ilm*) in the proper sense of the word; additionally, *'ilm* should always be accompanied by the appropriate practice (*'amal*). He states that the knowledge that is embedded in the *qalb* is the beneficial knowledge as opposed to the useless knowledge criticized by the Prophet when he said, "O God! I seek refuge in You from knowledge

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[712] Ibid., 38-39.

[713] Ibid., 40.

[714] Al-Tirmidhī, *al-Furūq*, 56.

that has no benefit (*lā yanfa'*)."[715] On the basis of another Prophetic statement, "Whoever acts in accordance with what he knows, God gives him knowledge of what he does not know", al-Tirmidhī calls attention to the practical and experiential aspect of knowledge.[716] He asserts that the station of the *qalb* is a profound *maqām* whose specific sub-stages are bestowed by particular Divine graces, including unveilings and witnessings. The spiritual elite can witness Divine realities such as the nature of Divine acts (*af'āl al-rubūbiyyah*) as well as His unparalleled power and exaltedness.[717] Furthermore, al-Tirmidhī argues that the *maqāmāt al-qulūb* are not definitively fixed stations. For instance, on the basis of the requisite spiritual accomplishments, one can rise from the level of the *ṣadr* to the upper *maqāmāt*, just as one may fall in rank if one ignores one's duties.[718] Knowledge that is not conjoined with practice or good deeds is merely theoretical knowledge, which is not, after all, the ultimate purpose of Islamic education. Thus al-Tirmidhī emphasizes the necessity of the complementarity and interdependence of *'ilm* and *'amal*.[719]

Al-Tirmidhī states that the beginning of worshipping (*'ibādah*) the Lord is *'ilm*. If a person becomes knowledgeable, he attains gnosis (*idhā 'alimta 'arafta*), and if he attains gnosis, then he worships properly (*idhā 'arafta 'abadta*).[720] Al-Tirmidhī says that *ma'rifah* is like a tree planted in the hearts of the *muwaḥḥidūn* by God Who made them

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[715] Al-Tirmidhī, *Bayān al-farq*, 49-50.

[716] Ibid., 50.

[717] Ibid., 50.

[718] Ibid., 59-61.

[719] Ibid., 67.

[720] Al-Tirmidhī, *al-Masā'il al-maknūnah*, 124.

responsible for its cultivation (*tarbiyah*) as much as possible so that they would enjoy its fruits. As this tree gradually gets bigger, taller and thicker, its branches get stronger and its fruit gets tastier. The cultivation of the tree with water is comparable to the function of *'ilm*; the soil and guardianship in the garden resemble good deeds (*a'māl al-birr*) and God-fearingness/God-consciousness (*taqwā*), respectively. This process continues until the time of harvesting the fruit. The life of this tree is dependent on the knowledge (*'ilm*) of God, and its food and the purity of its fruits are dependent on good deeds and God-fearingness/God-consciousness, respectively, just as the life of any tree and its food are dependent on water and soil in the same order.[721] In a similar context, al-Tirmidhī underlines the practical aspect of such an epistemological procedure when he makes a reference to a *ḥadith* that states, "The beginning of *ḥikmah* is the fear of God."[722]

Al-Tirmidhī asserts that epistemological positions of the four stations are complementary and inclusive with respect to one another; whether they are expressed outwardly/exoterically (*ẓāhir*) and/or inwardly/esoterically (*bāṭin*), religious concepts are inextricably connected to one another. In his view, whoever observes only the *'ilm al-*

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[721] Ibid., 133.

[722] Al-Tirmidhī, *Nawādir al-uṣūl* II: 118. Interestingly, this *ḥadīth* resembles a verse in the Old Testament, Proverbs 1:7, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge." In the Hebrew Bible, however, the word is not *hokhmah*, but instead *da'at* which means "knowledge". In fact, there are other *aḥādīth* in line with this statement which put *ḥikmah* and fear of God in the same context. For instance, according to al-Makkī's report, the Prophet says with regard to *ḥikmah*, "Whoever is content/satisfied with God (*istaghnā bi-Allāh*), God makes other people in need of him and whoever makes the fear of God present in his heart, God makes him speak with/by *ḥikmah*." Al-Makkī, *'Ilm*, 101. As for the epistemological relationship between the concepts of God-fearingness and knowledge, Islamic sources also mention statements parallel to the Biblical verse above, but with a different wording. A *ḥadīth* narrated by 'Ā'ishah, for instance, uses a parallel syntactical stracture between knowledge and God-fearingness in which the Prophet says, "Among you I am the most knowledgeable of God and the most attentive with respect to fearing Him (*ana a'lamukum bi-Allāh wa-ashaddukum la-hu khashyatan*)..." Al-Kharrāz, 160. God-fearingness in the context of religious epistemology is not, therefore, unknown to Muslim scholarship. In fact, the Qur'an also underlines this point, saying (35:28) "Only those fear God, from among His servants, who have knowledge."

ẓāhir and denies the *'ilm al-bāṭin* is a hypocrite (*munāfiq*), while whoever observes only the latter and denies the former is a heretic (*zindīq*). Such a person's esoteric knowledge does not represent true knowledge, but only Satanic inspirations. As for a *muslim*, *mu'min* and *'ārif*, they believe in what is prescribed in the Qur'an and *Sunnah*, and they follow conscientiously the rules of revealed Law (*Sharī'ah*).[723] Al-Tirmidhī therefore argues that the esoteric method and explanations must be in agreement with and subordinate to the exoteric ones, for originally, they do not contradict each other. He similarly asserts that the exoteric meaning regulates esoteric articulations and that any esoteric doctrine which contradicts the apparent meaning of the *Sharī'ah* is false.[724]

IV. The merit of *ḥikmah*

As much as *ḥikmah* is a magnificent heavenly gift given to only a small number of distinguished people, it is also an immense responsibility placed on their shoulders. Those who have been rewarded with *ḥikmah* ought to speak and act meticulously in accord with this exclusive treatment. Relating from earlier authorities, al-Sulamī reports that in God's presence there is a right (*ḥaqq*) for everything and that the most essential right in the presence of God is the right of *ḥikmah*. Whoever gives *ḥikmah* to an undeserving person, God will claim this right and such a giver will receive His

[723] Al-Tirmidhī, *Bayān al-farq*, 53.

[724] Ibid., 78-79. Similarly, Abū Sa'īd al-Kharrāz says, "Every/any *bāṭin* that contradicts the *ẓāhir* is *bāṭil*." See editor's introduction to al-Kharrāz, 18. Supporting this essential point, al-Makkī asserts that there are two kinds of knowledge (*'ilm*): esoteric (*bāṭin*) and exoteric (*ẓāhir*). The two are bases (*aṣlān*) and cannot do without each other. Their situation is similar to the relationship between *islām* and *īmān*, which are inseparably connected to each other, as is the case of the body and the heart. Al-Makkī, *'Ilm*, 88.

disapprobation.[725] *Ḥikmah* is so precious that by its nature it requires compliance to its significance and demands. According to al-Sulamī's report,

> If a man hears *ḥikmah* and does not acknowledge it, he becomes a sinful (*mudhnib*) person; but if he hears it and does not practice it, then he becomes a hypocrite (*munāfiq*).[726]

Ḥikmah makes a person completely dedicated to the service of truth in every manner, in word as well as in deed.[727] In principle, *ḥikmah* is not given to anybody on the basis of his family, social standing, wealth or physical qualities; rather, God gives *ḥikmah* to very distinguished people like Luqmān, who was a sincere pious man.[728]

In order to attain *ḥikmah*, a person must prepare himself for it through obligatory and supererogatory deeds, but even then there is no guarantee that he will possess this notion at the end of his personal strivings. In other words, *ḥikmah* cannot be attained merely through personal efforts, although those who have attained it have in all cases, followed such scrupulous spiritual practice. Scrupulous spiritual practice is thus a necessary, though not a sufficient condition. On the other hand, whoever has reached the reality of a spiritual concept and matured with respect to it, inherits *ḥikmah* whether he is aware of this fact or not. In this context, it is said that whoever claims that he is an ascetic in this world in the proper sense of the word, while he has not been given *ḥikmah*, is a liar.[729] Thus a seeker of *ḥikmah* should strive thorough the acquisition of epistemological and practical preconditions to make himself existentially ready for this

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[725] Al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 261.

[726] Ibid., 387.

[727] Ibid., 483.

[728] Al-Makkī, *'Ilm*, 93.

[729] Ibid., 58. On the authority of al-Kharrāz, al-Qushayrī reports, "Whoever thinks that he could attain his goal (*maṭlūb*) through [merely] his personal effort (*jahd*) tires himself out in vain, but at the same time, whoever thinks that this would occur without his own effort hopes idly." Al-Qushayrī, *al-Risalāh*, 5.

gift. According to al-Makkī's report, Yaḥyā b. Mu'ādh (d. 258/872) explains this concentric relationship as follows,

> There are many people, but the knowledgeable ones (*'ulamā'*) among them are few; there are many knowledgeable people, but the comprehending ones (*fuqahā'*) among them are few; there are many comprehending people, but the *ḥukamā'* among them are few. The speech of knowledgeable people makes the eyes cry while the speech of *ḥukamā'* makes the heart cry.[730]

It is also said that the speech of the *'ulamā'* cures sick people, but the speech of the *ḥukamā'* gives new life to those who are [spiritually] dead. As for the speech of the *'ārifūn*, it is pleasing to God.[731] At the same time, *ḥikmah* gives an indescribable pleasure and delight to the gnostic. On the authority of Yaḥyā b. Mu'ādh, al-Makkī states that an *'ārif* leaves this world without being satiated with four things: a) listening to *ḥikmah*, b) being delighted/happy (*fariḥ*) with God, c) enjoyment (*taladhdhudh*) with reciting the Qur'an, and d) seeking cure (*istishfā'*) through weeping (*bukā'*).[732]

Ibrāhīm b. Adham (d. 163/779) relates a conversation between himself and his senior Sufi fellow, Aslam b. Yazīd al-Juhanī of Alexandria. The latter explains to the former, who was a young ascetic then, that a servant can hope for reward (*thawāb*) from God only after training his soul (*nafs*) in patience (*ṣabr*), the lowest grade or level of which is training the self/soul (*nafs*) against the probability/likelihood (*iḥtimāl*) of its reprehensible qualities (*makārih*). When the soul of such a servant is likely to get involved with reprehensible things, God puts a light (*nūr*) in his heart to allow him to

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[730] Al-Makkī, *'Ilm*, 56. Al-Makkī introduces a similar hierarchical classification of human beings on the basis of their hearts when he states that a *ḥakīm* heart is one thousand times better than a knowledgeable (*'alīm*) heart; a believing (*mu'min*) heart is one thousand times better than a submitting/submitted (*muslim*) heart; and a convinced (*mūqin*) heart is in turn one thousand times better than a *mu'min* heart. Ibid., 54.

[731] Ibid., 56.

[732] Ibid., 79.

distinguish between right and wrong. Aslam quotes a saying he attributes to Jesus in this context,

> Do not give *ḥikmah* to those who are not worthy (*ahl*) of it, as they would waste it. But do not prevent qualified people from it either, since this would be treating *ḥikmah* unjustly.[733]

Aslam also advised Ibrāhīm that when the latter accompanies and converses with the utmost pious and godly people, he should be very careful because God's anger and contentment occur in accordance with their anger and contentment. These people are *ḥukamā'* and *'ulamā'* and they are content with God; they are very close to Him, after the prophets and truthful ones (*ṣiddīqūn*).[734] In order to attain *ḥikmah* one is expected to abandon this-worldly things completely, for the light of *ḥikmah* illuminates (*istanāra*) a *ḥakīm* only after leaving/giving up this world.[735] On the authority of Abū Hurayrah (d. 58/677), al-Makkī asserts that no one can attain *ḥikmah* through a merely intellectual search. Rather, if a person practices that which he knows to be good and abandons that which he knows to be evil, *ḥikmah* is with him even if he is not aware of this fact.[736] Al-Makkī further states that such a methodology of mutual interdependence of knowledge

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[733] Al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 32. This saying recalls a verse in the New Testament, Matthew 7:6, "Do not give dogs what is holy and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under foot and turn to attack you."

[734] Al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 32-33.

[735] Ibid., 81. In this regard, al-Makkī reports that it was revealed to the prophet David that any heart that loves this world is prohibited from tasting the pleasant flavor of *ḥikmah*. Al-Makkī, *'Ilm*, 80. Al-Qushayrī also talks about such an essential mystical notion in the context of his exposition on the concept of hunger (*jū'*). He states that *jū'* is among the characteristics of the Sufis and one of the pillars of striving (*mujāhadah*). By means of refraining from eating, the Sufis find the wellsprings (*'uyūn*) of *ḥikmah* in hunger. Al-Qushayrī, *al-Risalāh*, 72. In order to testify to this important point further, al-Qushayrī cites another saying by Sufis which reads, "God has placed five things in five places: glory/honor/grace (*'izz*) in obedience (*ṭā'ah*), disgrace/lowness (*dhull*) in disobedience/sin (*ma'ṣiyah*), awe (*haybah*) in nightly worship (*qiyām al-layl*), *ḥikmah* in the empty stomach, and wealth (*ghinā*) in contentment (*qanā'ah*)." Al-Qushayrī, *al-Risalāh*, 81-82.

[736] Al-Makkī, *'Ilm*, 66.

and practice was also in use among the earlier religious nations before Islam, and in line with this, it was phrased by the Prophet as,

> Whoever practices that which he knows, God bestows upon him knowledge of that which he does not know (*man 'amila bi-mā ya'lamu warrathahu Allāhu 'ilma mā lam-ya'lam*).[737]

Al-Makkī further theorizes the way *ḥikmah* should be sought and reports from previous authorities saying,

> Whoever leaves/abandons unlawful things (*ḥarām*) for forty days, God creates springs of *ḥikmah* in his heart and ignites lamps of gnosis (*ma'rifah*) in his breast. Such a person becomes an ascetic towards this world, recognizes its defects, and knows its diseases as well as the treatments for them.[738]

With respect to their positions regarding *'ilm* and *ḥikmah*, al-Makkī classifies mankind into four categories depending on their tongues and hearts: a) Those whose tongues are knowledgeable but whose hearts are ignorant, which is the situation of impudent (*fājir*) scholars. b) Those whose hearts are knowledgeable but whose tongues are ignorant, which is the situation of God-fearing/God-conscious scholars. c) Those whose tongues and hearts both are knowledgeable, which is the situation of lordly/godly (*rabbānī*) scholars whose number is not many. d) Those whose tongues and hearts both are ignorant, which represent the group from which every believer should stay away as the Prophet declared, "Be a scholar (*'ālim*), a learner (*muta'allim*), a listener (*mustami'*), or a

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[737] Al-Makkī, *Qūt* I: 285. Relating this essential principle in Sufism to the concept of *ḥikmah*, al-Qushayrī reports on the authority of Abū 'Uthmān al-Ḥīrī (d. 298/910), "The *murīd* is one who, when he hears something of the Sufi sciences and acts accordingly, this (his hearing and practice) becomes a *ḥikmah* in his heart, from which he benefits until the end of his life." Al-Qushayrī, *al-Risalāh*, 102.

[738] Al-Makkī, *'Ilm*, 63. In the same context, al-Makkī reports a saying by earlier *ḥukamā'* that, "If a person becomes an ascetic towards this world, God appoints in his heart an angel who plants *ḥikmah* there just as anyone among yourselves plants trees in his garden." Ibid., 63.

lover [of knowledge] (*muḥibb*); and do not be a fifth, lest you perish."[739] Some scholars argued that this "fifth" group represents those who dislike scholars.[740]

For Sufis, *ḥikmah* is a very noble thing and it may not be found or reached effortlessly.[741] Those who aspire to attain *ḥikmah* should first practice properly the notions of lengthening silence (*ṭūl al-ṣamt*) and speaking only as much as necessary (*al-kalām 'alā qadr al-ḥājah*).[742] Al-Qushayrī emphasizes this fundamental point reporting, "The Sufis (*ḥukamā'*) have inherited *ḥikmah* by means of silence (*ṣamt*) and contemplation (*tafakkur*)."[743] *Ḥikmah* may then be reached through and within a totality of other religious notions necessary for a decent spirituality as Jesus said,

> Certainty (*yaqīn*) is the life (*ḥayāh*) of faith (*īmān*) and *ḥikmah* is the light of the heart. *Ḥikmah* without *yaqīn*, *yaqīn* without God-fearingness/God-consciousness (*taqwā*), and *taqwā* without renunciation (*zuhd*) [of] this world are impossible; and the key to all these are imploring/supplication (*taḍarru'*) and invocation (*du'ā'*). How then could a door be opened to you without a key?[744]

Sufis elucidate the epistemological and practical preconditions of mystical concepts, asserting that seven things are naturally, as well as exclusively, found in seven types of people. If someone finds one of these things in anyone other than these people, his finding is based on falsehood (*bāṭil*). Sufis list the notions and their natural holders as

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[739] Ibid., 105-106.

[740] Ibid., 106.

[741] In the context of the Qur'anic verse 42:19, "God is All-gentle (*laṭīf*) to His servants, providing for whomsoever He wills (*yarzuqu man yashā'*); He is the All-strong, All-mighty," al-Makkī relates an interpretation by al-Qāsim b. Sallām (d. 224/838). The latter says that God provides *ḥikmah* and perspicacity (*fiṭnah*) for whomever He wills and He does not give these generously to everyone." Ibid., 52.

[742] Ibid., 53. In the same manner, al-Kharrāz underlines the significance of the concept of "shortening one's expectations" (*qaṣr āmal*) in the mystical life when he says, "In fact, asceticism with regard to this world means shortening one's expectations." Al-Kharrāz, 73.

[743] Al-Qushayrī, *al-Risalāh*, 63.

[744] Al-Makkī, *'Ilm*, 53.

follows: a) *Ḥikmah* in ascetics (*zāhidūn*), b) listening/audition (*samā'*) in passionate lovers (*'āshiqūn*), c) sadness (*ḥuzn*) in those who long (*mushtāqūn*), d) weeping (*bukā'*) in those who are aggrieved (*maḥzūnūn*), e) humility (*dhull*) in lovers (*muḥibbūn*), f) annihilation (*fanā'*) in gnostics (*'ārifūn*), and g) indication/allegory (*ishārah*) in finders (*wājidūn*).[745]

The following report is worth mentioning on account of its detailed allegorical explanation of mystical terms and their semantic connotations with respect to one another, as well as to their respective concepts. Yaḥyā b. Mu'ādh discribes the subtle psychological process of the spiritual progress within a Sufi allegorically saying,

> In the heart of a gnostic (*'ārif*), there are ten gardens (*basātīn*): a) the garden of the declaration of God's unity (*tawḥīd*), b) the garden of certitude (*yaqīn*), c) the garden of gnosis (*ma'rifah*), d) the garden of love (*maḥabbah*), e) the garden of knowledge (*'ilm*), f) the garden of forbearance (*ḥilm*), g) the garden of the path (*sabīl*) [to God] together with the *Sunnah*, h) the garden of humbleness (*tawāḍu'*) together with devoutness (*khushū'*), i) the garden of the lawful (*ḥalāl*), and j) the garden of generosity/openhandedness (*sakhāwah*). The *'ārif* should go into those gardens and pluck out that which does not fit there. First, he goes into the garden of *tawḥīd* and if he sees there any doubt (*shakk*), hypocrisy (*nifāq*), or insincerity/eyeservice (*riyā'*), he plucks it out and throws it away. Second, he goes into the garden of *yaqīn* and if he sees any greed (*ḥirṣ*) or expectation (*amal*) there, he plucks it out and throws it away. Third, he goes into the garden of *ma'rifah* and if he sees any anthropomorphization (*tashbīh*), likening (*tamthīl*) or denying [of God's attributes] (*ta'aṭṭul*) there, he plucks it out and throws it away. Fourth, he goes into the garden of love and if he sees any preoccupation with things other than God (*ishtighāl bi-al-aghyār*), or being pleased with the creation (*ḥalāwat al-khalq*) and habitation (*diyār*) there, he plucks it out and throws it away. Fifth, he goes into the garden of *'ilm* and if he sees any ignorance (*jahl*) there he plucks it out and throws it away. Sixth, he goes into the garden of *ḥilm* and if he sees any anger (*ghaḍab*), overzealousness (*ḥamiyyah*), treachery (*khiyānah*), or incapacity (*'ajz*) there, he plucks it out and throws it away. Seventh, he goes into the garden of the *Sunnah* and if he sees any innovation (*bid'ah*) or deviation (*zaygh*) there, he plucks it out and throws it away. Eighth, he goes into the garden of the *ḥalāl* and if he sees any unlawful (*ḥarām*) or doubtful thing there, he plucks it out and throws it away. And ninth, he goes into the garden of *sakhā'* and if he sees any stinginess (*bukhl*) or greediness (*tam'*) there, he plucks it out and throws it away.[746]

A *ḥakīm* has social responsibilities in the society in which he lives, for he is expected to lead his society in a better direction through his exemplary personal behavior.

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[745] Ibid., 53-54.

[746] Ibid., 63-65. Apparently, al-Makkī has missed mentioning the garden of *tawāḍu'* in the second part of his list.

He should be the first to put into practice whatever he advises people around him to do. He is expected to facilitate things for his community, even at the expense of his own suffering. On the authority of Ruwaym b. Aḥmad al-Baghdādī (d. 303/915), al-Sulamī reports,

> Part of the defining quality (*min ḥukm*) of a *ḥakīm* is to make things easier (*yuwassi'*) with respect to rules (*aḥkām*) for his brothers, while restraining himself strictly (*yuḍayyiq 'alā nafsihi fī-hā*); because being tolerant towards his brothers means following knowledge, while being restrictive towards himself is a part of the defining quality of scrupulousness (*min ḥukm al-wara'*).[747]

In the same manner, one of the basic characteristics of a Sufi master is being a *ḥakīm* himself and dealing with the matters of his disciples and community with *ḥikmah*.[748] The Prophet underlines the potential functions of a *ḥakīm* when he says, "Come close to a *ḥakīm*, for you will find in him that which you want."[749]

Being insightful, sharp and able to choose the best course of action in the face of difficulty and ambiguity are of the most essential characteristics of a *ḥakīm*. Ibn Mas'ūd (d. 31/651) is reported to have asserted that whoever responds to every question that people ask him is a foolish person. A *ḥakīm* is supposed to possess perspicacity/discernment (*fiṭnah*) and know the capacity of each person so that he can address him/her in proportion to his/her understanding and intelligence. Thus a *ḥakīm* reveals that which is appropriate to make public and conceals that which it is not appropriate to reveal.[750]

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[747] Al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 181. See also, al-Qushayrī, *al-Risalāh*, 22.

[748] Al-Sulamī, *Tis'at kutub*, 143-150. In this regard, relying on previous authorities, al-Sulamī says, "The sign of *ḥikmah* is the knowledge of the portions measured out to people (*ma'rifat aqdār al-nās*)." Al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 193.

[749] Ibid., 52.

[750] Ibid., 73. Al-Makkī also reports that some earlier authorities said, "Seven things are wasted in seven situations: 1) A *ḥakīm* among ignorant people who do not listen to his *ḥikmah* and uphold his sanctity (*ḥurmah*); 2) A lamp in the light of the sun; 3) A delicious meal presented to a drunk person; 4) A beautiful

Those who possess *ḥikmah* acquire an instinctive characteristic through it and this attribute turns them into venerable figures in the eyes of their people. On the authority of al-Tustarī, al-Makkī relates,

> The scholars (*'ulamā'*) of the Israelites got together and said, "Indeed we have learned knowledge (*'ilm*), but we have not increased on account of it in awe/reverence (*haybah*), *ḥikmah* or in scrupulousness (*wara'*)." Thereupon, God sent a revelation to the prophet of that time and instructed him to tell them, "Indeed I grant awe/reverence (*haybah*) during the hours before daybreak (*asḥār*), while you are asleep; I send *ḥikmah* out in an empty stomach, while you are full; and I distribute God-fearingness/God-consciousness (*taqwā*) and scrupulousness in the companionship of God-fearing/God-conscious people (*fī suḥbat al-atqiyā'*), while you are separated from them (*mufāriqūn*)."[751]

According to a *ḥadīth* describing the Prophet's miraculous nightly journey (*Isrā'*), the people of the previous prophets were granted peculiar heavenly gifts and of the gifts given to the people of Muḥammad is *ḥikmah*. The *ḥadīth* depicts a scene in the *Isrā'* in which the Prophet asks God the following question,

> O my God, you gave knowledge (*'ilm*) to David and Solomon; right guidance (*rushd*) to Abraham; proof (*furqān*) and light (*ḍiyā'*) to Moses and Aaron; and clear signs (*bayyināt*) to Jesus, the son of Mary, whom You confirmed with the Holy Spirit. You favored the people (*ummah*) of Moses over the other scholars of their time. What is the thing that You have given to me and to my people? God replied, "O Muḥammad, I have given the Seven Oft-Repeated (*sab'an min al-mathānī*) [752] and the mighty Qur'an to you and *ḥikmah* to your people; whoever is given *ḥikmah* has indeed been given much good."[753]

The fact that *ḥikmah* is given particularly to the people of Muḥammad, however, does not exclude the possibility that it can also be found among some other peoples.

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woman married to an impotent man (*'innīn*); 5) A person who has a nice voice but sings in a graveyard; 6) The writing of a pencil [but] with a poor handwriting; 7) Soft speech conducted by a hostile and jealous person." Ibid., 74.

[751] Ibid., 103.

[752] The phrase "*sab'an min al-mathānī*" is regarded to be one of the names of the *Fātiḥah*, which consists of seven verses.

[753] Al-Makkī, *'Ilm*, 49-50. Al-Makkī further elucidates his points in this context stating that Luqmān was given a heavenly option to choose between prophethood and *ḥikmah* and chose *ḥikmah* over prophethood. The prophet Solomon was also given a heavenly option to choose between having kingdom (*mulk*), knowledge (*'ilm*) or intellect (*'aql*). He chose knowledge, but was given a kingdom along with it as well. As for the prophet Muḥammad, he was given to choose between wealth (*ghinā*) and poverty (*faqr*). He chose poverty over wealth and said, "I am hungry one day and full on the following day; I live as a poor man and will be resurrected among poor people." Ibid., 55.

Sufis believe that *ḥikmah* should be sought and taken from every source regardless of its possessors. Al-Makkī relates a saying setting the principle of this matter as,

> Take gold from stone (*ḥajar*), pearls (*lu'lu'*) from the sea, musk from skin, pearls (*durr*) from an oyster (*ṣadaf*), and *ḥikmah* from anyone who says it, even if he might not be worthy of it, as many a shot is without a (skilled) marksman.[754]

On the authority of Dhū al-Nūn, al-Makkī relates that during one of his expeditions, the former saw a huge stone on which the following statement was written, "How do you seek the knowledge of that which you do not know while you do not practice that which you do know?" Upon seeing this report, Dhū al-Nūn said to himself, "Take it (this expression) as a *ḥikmah*."[755] Al-Makkī also records an anecdote regarding the permissibility of taking *ḥikmah* even from an unbeliever. According to the story, two companions of the Prophet, Ḥudhayfah b. al-Yamān and Salmān al-Fārisī, once met an unbelieving woman and asked her if she knew of a clean place for them to pray. The woman responded to their request saying, "Clean/purify your heart [first], then pray wherever you wish." Ḥudhayfah and Salmān looked at each other and said, "Take a *ḥakīmah* word (*kalimah*) [even] from the heart of an unbelieving woman."[756]

In conclusion, what can be proposed from all these materials? Early Sufi works mention *ḥikmah* in general in the context of their epistemological constructs, especially in relation to *'ilm* (knowledge), *ma'rifah* (gnosis), *'aql* (intelligence), *qalb* (heart) and *fiqh* (comprehension). These sources at the same time treat *ḥikmah* as a practical concept in such a manner that without this aspect, they argue, *ḥikmah* cannot be properly understood or actualized.

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[754] Ibid., 50.

[755] Ibid., 89-90.

[756] Ibid., 51.

I have discussed the arguments regarding *ḥikmah* presented by early Sufi authorities within a network of associated concepts. In order to provide a clearer picture, I have categorized their writings into three major groups as follows: 1) I have analyzed *ḥikmah* within a network of concepts in the treatments of the earliest Sufi authoritative figures, especially of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and Ja'far al-Ṣādiq. 2) I have concentrated on *ḥikmah* within the contextual formulations of early Sufi exegetical works, including those of al-Thawrī, al-Tustarī, al-Sulamī, al-Tha'labī and al-Qushayrī. 3) I have contextualized *ḥikmah* within the organized totality of mystical concepts elucidated in early Sufi manuals and treatises, primarily those of al-Muḥāsibī, al-Junayd, al-Nūrī, al-Tirmidhī and al-Makkī. I have also discussed the merit of *ḥikmah* in those writings and the ways set out for attaining this desirable quality. In doing so, I have attempted to elucidate, as much as possible, the modes of perception and inner formative forces of the early Muslim spiritual authorities across their various expositions. In this regard, I believe that throughout my discussions I have presented additional textual proofs that strengthen Massignon's arguments, which emphasize that Sufism and its terminology are based on the Qur'an and thus innate to Islam, not imported from outside.

The reason I have examined the notion of *ḥikmah* in early Sufi works within a network of related concepts, rather than dealing with it as an individual term in an atomistic manner, is the fact that *ḥikmah* in general does not stand in those writings in isolation from other related and complementary concepts. Rather, such concepts constitute collectively a highly organized technical system in a complex network of multiple conceptual interrelationships. In addition, we know that the definition and elucidation of many Sufi doctrines and concepts were recorded by later authors such as

al-Sarrāj, al-Kalābādhī, al-Makkī, Abū Nu'aym, al-Hujwīrī and 'Aṭṭār. These writers use, as is to be expected, the language and terminology of their own times. Their categories are phrased in the terms of their contemporary linguistic conventions rather than in those of the original thinkers. I have therefore not concentrated merely on etymology or original meanings of "*ḥikmah*" to fix and define it precisely. Such an approach, I believe, has helped me contextualize *ḥikmah* in a more nuanced fashion in the collective memory of mystical authorities. Neither have I attempted to present a concrete historical background of *ḥikmah* or to provide a clear-cut picture of its semantic continuities, shifts and innovations step-by-step over time, because such an attempt would require a meticulous researching of *ḥikmah* across the entire range of the early Sufi textual corpus, most of the constituent works of which have been lost forever in their original forms.

In the early Sufi texts that are available to us, *ḥikmah* emerges as an elusive term that can be defined as "wisdom", "sagacity", "rationale", "underlying reason", "knowledge" or "mystic aphorism" depending on its context. Authors of mystical Qur'an commentaries in the formative period of this discipline argue that for each statement in the Holy Book, in addition to the literal, outward or exoteric meaning, there is an inward or esoteric sense. This inward meaning springs from and grows out of literal statements in the Qur'an and is born in the heart of a gnostic (*'ārif*) in the process of spiritual practice and enlightenment. Sufi commentators do not claim that their interpretations are the unique correct explanations; instead, they accept the possibility of various explanations for the same notion at different stages of the mystical path. In their view, this occurs in a concentric and complementary manner, though it may look incoherent

and confusing to those who are not familiar with such an epistemological approach. This peculiar epistemological viewpoint, on the other hand, does not justify arbitrary and baseless interpretations. Sufi authorities do set general principles for a proper mystical commentary. They argue, for instance, that the inward meaning introduced for a Qur'anic statement may not be contradictory to the outward sense of that passage, nor should it be claimed as the only meaning of that statement. They further assert that there should be an additional supporting attestation (*shāhid*) from corroborative texts to justify such an understanding and that there should not be any obvious religious and intellectual principle opposing that interpretation.

The pioneering figures of early Sufi Qur'an commentary are primarily interested in the practical aspects of *ḥikmah*. Al-Ḥasan and Ja'far associate *ḥikmah* with moral scrupulousness (*wara'*) in a full abandonment of this-worldly things and matters (*zuhd*). They emphasize the strictest observance of religious commands in sincerity and ascetic retrospection. In their understanding, *ḥikmah* means a combination of thorough knowledge and practice, for a *ḥakīm* is expected to prove the truth and sincerity of his words by means of his actions, since it is action that leads to eternal salvation. As long as knowledge falls short of action, they argue, it basically becomes a burden for the knower, rather than a light indicating the straight path, which is the original function of knowledge in Islam.

According to Ja'far's terminology, *ḥikmah* is closely connected to the Qur'anic concepts of *'aql* and *qalb* which determine a person's ultimate response to the heavenly message. He also highlights the concepts of forbearance (*ḥilm*), *'ilm* and *'amal* in his understanding of religion. In Ja'far's view, since *'ilm* is a product of *'aql*, which is the

most precious thing, since it was the first spiritual entity created from the light of God, it can belong only to well-deserving people. From this fact, it follows naturally that those who possess knowledge should be treated with the utmost respect in Muslim society. This privileged status places, at the same time, an enormous responsibility on the shoulders of men of knowledge. They may not be excused for certain small mistakes for which ordinary people might normally be pardoned. In addition, knowledgeable people should not misuse their *'ilm*, but rather should complete it by practicing it most diligently, which is the original mission of a *ḥakīm*. Similar explanations for the concept of *ḥikmah* can also be attested in the writings of al-Thawrī, al-Tustarī, al-Sulamī, al-Tha'labī and al-Qushayrī.

According to al-Tustarī's narration, the Prophet stated that the Qur'an is God's *ḥikmah* among His servants. The Prophet likened the religious condition of people who learn the Qur'an and put its instructions into practice to prophethood, with the exception that they do not receive further revelation (*waḥy*). But still, with respect to the level of their spiritual stage and otherworldly reward, they are treated like the prophets except that they do not carry out prophetic missions. On the authority of previous scholars, al-Tustarī further explains the Qur'anic *ḥikmah* variously as the Qur'an itself, understanding the Qur'an, intellect, prophethood, comprehension in religious matters, following the Messenger of God, fear of God, and the like. In the final analysis, al-Tustarī understands *ḥikmah* as a combination of the sciences beneficial to humankind.

Al-Makkī, on the other hand, says that God gave prophethood to distinguished individuals among the people of purity and completed the institution of prophethood and closed its door with the Prophet Muḥammad. As for *ḥikmah* alone, God had given it to

Luqmān and since then, He has kept its door unreservedly open until the Day of Resurrection. Al-Makkī asserts that *ḥikmah* is one of the great Divine blessings given to mankind and that it should be sought through ascetic practices including hunger and thirst. The knowledge of *ḥikmah* cannot be obtained by means of conventional instruction or book knowledge. Rather, al-Makki argues, it can only be attained through good deeds, which establish an intimate and special relationship between a servant and God Who, in turn, places *ḥikmah* in the servant's purified and sincere heart as a result of the latter's supererogatory esoteric practices.

Al-Sulamī lists similar definitions of the word *ḥikmah* in the Qur'an and asserts that it also refers to a light which distinguishes between God-given inspiration and devilish insinuations. He reports that *ḥikmah* means *'ilm*, *ḥilm*, *'aql* and *ma'rifah*, and that it was only after their diligent efforts to humble their (prideful) selves (*nufūs*) that *ḥikmah* started having influence on the previous Sufi masters. The intrinsic relationship between the notions of *ḥikmah* and *'aql* is further attested in a Prophetic statement that draws a parallel between the level of the intelligibility or comprehensibility of the prophetic discourse with the intellectual level of the people receiving that message. According to al-Sulamī's writings, depending on the spiritual levels of different Sufis, *ḥikmah* speaks to the hearts of gnostics (*'ārifūn*), ascetics (*zāhidūn*), worshipers (*'ubbād*), desiring ones or aspirants (*murīdūn*) and men of knowledge (*'ulamā'*) by means of the tongue of confirmation (*taṣdīq*), preference (*tafḍīl*), successfulness (*tawfīq*), reflection (*tafakkur*) and remembrance (*tadhakkur*), respectively. Al-Sulamī concludes that one cannot be characterized as *ḥakīm* until one becomes *ḥakīm* in one's actions (*af'āl*), words

(*aqwāl*) and states (*aḥwāl*). Otherwise such a person would be described as speaking of *ḥikmah*, but not as being a *ḥakīm* himself.

In al-Tha'labī's and al-Qushayrī's terminology, *ḥikmah* is positioned between practical (*'amalī*) and epistemological or intellectual (*'ilmī*) concepts as well. They treat *ḥikmah* as a central point connected inherently with *taqwā* (God-fearingness/God-consciousness), *zuhd* (asceticism), *wara'* (moral scrupulousness), *akhlāq* (good morals) and *'ibādāt* (acts of worship), on the one hand, and with *ilhām* (inspiration), *kashf* (unveiling), *ma'rifah* (gnosis or intuitive perception), *sirr* (secret) and *haqīqah* (reality), on the other. Practical notions, they assert, constitute starting points without which one cannot harvest epistemological fruits.

Throughout my discussions of the concept of *ḥikmah*, I have also underscored that unlike the merely discursively-oriented epistemologies of Muslim theologians (*mutakallimūn*) and philosophers (*falāsifah*), the Sufis introduce other means of knowledge, including and especially the heart (*qalb*). Sufis mention various divisions of the human organs of perception and their various functions which go far beyond the limitations assigned to them by theologians and philosophers. Sufis also talk about the various kinds of Divine support (light) these organs receive along the spiritual path. Within this general framework, however, early Sufi authors regularly introduce new divisions in the course of their expositions, which makes an analytic examination and clear categorization extremely difficult.

In the pages of early Sufi manuals and treatises as well, *ḥikmah* emerges as a theoretical and practical concept in its relation to other concepts in question. So far as its epistemological origin and function are concerned, *ḥikmah* relies strictly on religious and

spiritual acts of worship. Al-Muḥāsibī, for instance, elucidates *ḥikmah* within a network of associated epistemological and practical concepts and records that on the spiritual journey, *ḥikmah* corresponds to the state of hitting upon the truth (*isābat al-ṣawāb*). It is in this state that the True/Real (*ḥaqq*) reveals Himself to the heart of the servant. The former imparts *ḥikmah* and the insight of guidance in the latter's heart and intellect, respectively. In this manner, He enables the servant to comprehend Him. According to al-Muḥāsibī's explanations, *ḥikmah* is existentially preconditioned by other spiritual concepts in action, and silence (*ṣamt*) is the primary path to attaining *ḥikmah*.

Another central figure in early Sufi writings is al-Tirmidhī, who was given the title of *Ḥakīm* in succeeding mystical works. In his terminology, *ḥikmah* appears as a multivalent or polysemous term that contains simultaneously several different meanings, as well as levels of meaning. He himself uses the term *ḥakīm* to refer to both philosophers and Sufis, and even to the Qur'anic Luqmān.

The aforementioned authors argue that *ḥikmah* is a magnificent heavenly gift awarded only to a small number of distinguished people, but that it is simultaneously an immense responsibility placed on the shoulders of its recipients. *Ḥikmah* is not given to a person on the basis of his family, social status, wealth or physical qualities; rather, God gives *ḥikmah* only to His sincere and pious servants. Early Sufi theoreticians assert that, being a very noble thing, *ḥikmah* cannot be found or reached effortlessly. A seeker of *ḥikmah* must acquire the requisite epistemological and practical preconditions to make himself existentially prepared to receive this gift, for *ḥikmah* can be reached only through obligatory and supererogatory acts of worship indispensable to a decent spiritual life. In the final analysis, nevertheless, there is no deterministic relationship between *ḥikmah* and

personal strivings. Those who have been rewarded by God with *ḥikmah* should in turn speak and act meticulously in agreement with this exclusive gift, a gift that by its nature requires compliance to its demands. In this manner, elucidators of Sufi doctrines conclude that *ḥikmah* renders a person completely dedicated to the service of truth in every manner, in word as well as in deed.

For Sufis, in addition to his efforts to improve his individual characteristics, a *ḥakīm* also has social responsibilities in the society in which he lives, for he is expected to lead his community in a better direction through his exemplary personal behavior. The *ḥakīm* is expected to be the first to put into practice everything he advises people around him to do. He is further supposed to facilitate things for his community, while he ought to restrict himself rigorously to the regulations of that social order. In the same manner, one of the essential characteristics of a Sufi master is to become a *ḥakīm* himself and then to deal with the matters of his disciples and community with *ḥikmah*. To be able to actualize such missions, the *ḥakīm* is expected to be insightful, clever and able to choose the best course of action in the face of difficulty and ambiguity. Thanks to his inherent affinity with *ḥikmah*, the *ḥakīm* in time acquires instinctive personal and spiritual characteristics through *ḥikmah*, and thus his spiritual state turns him into a venerable figure in the eyes of his people.

FOUR

Ḥikmah in Early Philosophical Literature

The word *ḥikmah* has a wide range of connotations in Islamic philosophical literature. Its semantic setting goes beyond *falsafah* in the sense of Hellenistic philosophy, as *ḥikmah* contains all knowledge within the reach of man, and in this context, it also transcends *'ilm* (science).[757] In the formative period of their scholarly disciplines, the Muslims received a Greek intellectual heritage that in fact did not make a definitive distinction between philosophy and science. Many eminent Greek sages, including Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, were described by Arabic-writing intellectuals as *ḥukamā'*, meaning equally scientists and philosophers. Alongside this general convention, however, historians of Islamic philosophy ascribed *ḥikmah* exclusively to those sages whose knowledge and actions together conformed to the moral and religious principles outlined in the authoritative religious texts; they did *not* view

[757] Such an inclusive usage of *ḥikmah* may also be illustrated by the very name of the earliest scholarly institution of Muslims, namely the *Bayt al-ḥikmah* (House of *ḥikmah*) – the *Khizānat al-ḥikmah* (Storehouse of *ḥikmah*) being its initial form – founded at 215/830 in Baghdad by the 'Abbasite caliph al-Ma'mūn (reigned 198-218/813-833). According to Ibn al-Nadīm's (d. 379/990) report, this institution functioned as a scientific research center, library, and translation office at the same time. Ibn al-Nadīm, 353-356. The word *ḥikmah* in this usage indicates that starting from the earliest days Muslims understood *ḥikmah* as a comprehensive concept related to every kind of intellectual activity – including philosophy – in quest for truth. For a discussion on the political objectives behind the establishment of the *Bayt al-ḥikmah* and its relation to the translation movement from Greek into Arabic, see Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early 'Abbāsid Society (2nd-4th / 8th-10th centuries)* (London, 1998): 53-60. I should mention that in this work Gutas minimizes the significance of the *Bayt al-ḥikmah* in the intellectual activites of the 'Abbasid times and considers it as merely a bureau-like library that functioned as a small office for translations only from Persian into Arabic of Sasanian history and culture; otherwise, in Gutas' view, the *Bayt al-ḥikmah* was away from deserving to be called "a scholarly institution", or a comprehensive "translation office". For a detailed bibliographical analysis of the translations and the translators of this translation movement, see Gerhard Endress, "Die wissenschaftliche Literatur," *Grundriss der Arabischen Philologie* 2 (1987): 400-506, and 3 (Supplement) (1992): 3-152.

philosophy as idle speculation or the mere exercising of thought, since if that were the case they would have described every person who was engaged in thinking as a *ḥakīm*.

In this chapter of my dissertation, I will investigate the concept of *ḥikmah* in early Islamic philosophical writings. I will focus especially on the earliest Muslim philosophers' reception and conception of philosophy in its particular relation to *ḥikmah* as it is mentioned in the primary authoritative Muslim scriptures. In this context, I will consult the earliest works of Muslim authors on the beginning of philosophy in Greek antiquity and its journey to early Islamic times. This will include an analysis of the inner formative forces that caused Muslim intellectuals to become interested in Greek philosophy and its leading figures. As my case studies, I will examine the writings of three major Muslim philosophers from the formative period of Islamic philosophy, namely al-Kindī (d. *ca.* 260/873), al-Fārābī, (d. 339/950) and Ibn Sīnā (d. 428/1037), whose discussions I consider to be quite representative with respect the earliest Muslim philosophers' perception of philosophy in relation to Islamic *ḥikmah*. How do they treat philosophy in reference to Qur'anic and prophetic *ḥikmah*? How do they envision and situate themselves in comparision with the personalities of the preceding philosophical tradition? What are their primary motives for entering into philosophical inquiry? And what are the main objectives that they hope to achieve through philosophical investigation? To be able to find satisfactory answers to such questions, I will concentrate principally on their arguments concerning metaphysics (*al-falsafah al-ūlā* or *al-'ilm al-ilāhī*), in which these philosophers identify philosophy as Islamic *ḥikmah* more clearly.

As far as strictly philosophical studies in Arabic are concerned, there is no doubt that the origins of *falsafah* are purely Greek, for the philosophical activities of the Muslim intellectuals begin with the translations of the Greek philosophical texts into Arabic. These translations came into existence through either direct renderings from Greek, or from Syriac intermediary works. In such a context, philosophical inquiry was regarded by *falāsifah* as the continuation of the everlasting search of mankind for truth. As will be attested in the following pages, this universal and undying character of philosophical truth was the most attractive dimension of *falsafah* activities to Muslim thinkers in this formative period. In their inquiries, Muslim intellectuals thought that their efforts to attain such a sublime truth were in line and in harmony with the Qur'anic notion of *ḥikmah*, the search for which, moreover, was strongly recommended by the Prophet by any decent means possible.[758]

In the views of Muslim thinkers, attaining this *ḥikmah* was the most prestigious achievement of mankind irrespective of religious or ethnic background. From this perspective, none of the earliest Muslim philosophers whose works I have consulted in this chapter ascribe *falsafah* to a particular prophetic tradition. Their conception of

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[758] According to Ibn Fātik's statement, it was this prophetic encouragement (*Ḥikmah* is the stray camel of the believer [*ḍāllat al-mu'min*]; he takes it wherever he finds it) that motivated him to collect the wise sayings of earlier sages. Al-Mubashshir b. Fātik, *Mukhtār al-ḥikam wa-mahāsin al-kalim*, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī (Beirut, 1980): 1-2. According to Muslim thinkers, the principle of welcoming *ḥikmah* wherever it comes from was also prevalent among the ancient philosophers. Aristotle, for instance, is reported to have said, "Take the pearl from the oyster of the sea, the gold form the earth/soil, and *ḥikmah* from whoever says it." Ibn Fātik, 209.
For an overview of the intellectual centers of the Greeks in the Near and Middle East at the time of the rise of Islam in the seventh century, see Ian R. Netton, "The Origins of Islamic Philosophy," *Companion Encyclopedia of Asian Philosophy*, eds. B. Carr and I. Mahalingam (London, 1997). In this regard, Netton underlines three main centers of intellectual activity: Alexandria, primarily for philosophical studies; Jundi-Shāpūr for medical studies; and Ḥarrān for Neoplatonic and astral studies. Netton, "The Origins of Islamic Philosophy," 842-846. For an examination of the historical situation with regard to the relationship between Greek thought and the Christian Church in this region at the dawn of Islam, see Richard Walzer, "Islamic Philosophy," *Greek into Arabic: Essays on Islamic Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962): 1-29.

falsafah is not limited to any religious group; or, to put it in another way, they are not talking about a distinctively Islamic – as opposed to Christian or Jewish – philosophy, but only about a philosophy of mankind.[759] These philosophers, at the same time, openly profess their religious convictions to be Islamic, and they do not see any serious conflict between their philosophical inquiries and Qur'anic revelation; on the contrary, they see them as complementary.

If one is to relate their conception of philosophical knowledge to revelation, one might argue that Muslim philosophers conceptualize two kinds of *ḥikmah*s; one being prophetic or sacred, the other philosophic or intellectual. The first is purely and directly God-given, for personal intellectual efforts do not succeed to attain this *ḥikmah*. The second is dependent to a certain extent upon personal intellectual efforts, but as al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā point out as we will see in the following pages, the attainment of this kind of *ḥikmah* is dependent ultimately on a God-given personal intellectual capacity. Thus even for this second kind of *ḥikmah*, personal intellectual efforts are a necessary but not sufficient cause, for, in the final analysis, it requires that person's inborn giftedness. This

[759] If we approach the history of Arabic/Islamic philosophy from this perspective, the whole controversial question of whether we should refer to it exclusively as "Arabic" or "Islamic" would have a healthier ground for scholarly discussion. Gutas criticizes Corbin's understanding of the philosophical activities in the Muslim lands as "Islamic" on the basis of the latter's argument that this philosophy was linked innately to the Muslim mind. For Corbin's position see, Henry Corbin, *History of Islamic Philosophy*, trns. Liadain Sherrard (London, 1993). Gutas himself does not agree with this argument and asserts that we should use the word "Arabic", not "Islamic", to designate this philosophical tradition. He reminds us of the contribution of the non-Muslim philosophical figures to this tradition and argues that we should base our designation on the language which was the means of philosophical expression, rather than on the religion itself. Otherwise, Gutas adds, we could reduce Arabic philosophy to Islamic theology and mysticism. For Gutas's discussion see, Gutas, "The Study of Arabic Philosophy in the Twentieth Century: An Essay on the Historiography of Arabic Philosophy," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 29.1 (2002): 5-25. Throughout my own discussions in this chapter, I will be using the term "Islamic philosophy" in a more general cultural sense, meaning that the founding fathers of this intellectual tradition belong to the civilization called "Islamic", despite the fact that it includes many non-Muslim contributers, such as Ḥunayn b. Isḥāq, Qusṭā b. Luqā and Yaḥyā b. 'Ādī. By this term, I basically mean what Hodgson (*The Venture of Islam*, I [Chicago: 1974]) means by the term "Islamicate", referring to the culture or civilization, rather than to the religion itself. But since I do not feel quite at home with using Hodgson's term, I will be using "Islamic" instead, within the reserved semantic framework that I have just explained.

being the case, both kinds of *ḥikmahs* are directly or indirectly God-given and this idea thus confirms the Qur'anic principle outlined in 2:269, namely that it is God Who gives *ḥikmah* to whomever He wills.[760]

In the previous chapter, I mentioned a comparison made by Muslim scholarly authorities between the concepts of prophethood and *ḥikmah*. I cited their argument that God gave prophethood to distinguished individuals among the people of purity and closed the doors of this institution with the Prophet Muḥammad. As for *ḥikmah* alone, their argument is that God had given it to Luqmān and since then He has kept its door unreservedly open until the day of resurrection. Such a conception of *ḥikmah* echoes in the writings of historians of Muslim philosophy, as they recurrently associate the beginning of philosophy with Luqmān.

I have said that the origins of *falsafah* are purely Greek. At the same time, however, it is necessary to clarify further the main characteristics of this newly received heritage, since, in the process of transmission there were certain modifications between the original Greek ideas and those of Islamic times. This occurred partly at the hands of the later Greek commentators on the ancient philosophical figures, especially in the Neoplatonic schools of Athens and Alexandria in the fifth and sixth centuries B.C. In the case of Aristotle, for instance, not only was his philosophy subject to being melted in a Neoplatonic pot, but also a number of works that reached Arabic-speaking thinkers were erroneously attributed to him, namely the *Theology of Aristotle* and the *Elements of*

[760] In this context, Plato is reported to have said, "One of the things that facilitate a man's quest for wisdom (*ṭalab al-ḥikmah*) is the assistance [given to him] by fortune (*bakht*). By 'fortune' I do not mean that whose cause is unknown [i.e., luck], but I mean the divine fortune (*al-bakht al-rubūbī*) [i.e., divine causation] only, which illuminates the intellect (*'aql*) and guides it toward essential natures of things." Quoted in Gutas, *Greek Wisdom Literature in Arabic Translation*, 122.

Theology which were actually composed by Plotinus and Proclus, respectively.[761] These Neoplatonic commentators interpreted Aristotle's philosophy in line with that of Plato and thought that the purpose of these two great philosophers was the same. This argument of reconciliation found support in the Muslim lands as can be seen in al-Fārābī's work *The Harmony between the Views of the Divine Plato and Aristotle* (*al-Jam' bayn ra'yay al-ḥakīmayn Aflāṭūn al-ilāhī wa-Aristūṭālīs*), in which the author argues not only that the two primary philosophical authorities agree with one another, but also that philosophical convictions do not necessarily disagree with religious doctrines. Such a tendency resulted in the belief that true philosophy and religion do not contradict one another and that ultimately philosophy was the intellectual expression of religious beliefs. They merely use two different modes of expression.[762]

Another misleading impression received by Arabic-speaking philosophers with regard to the Greek philosophical heritage occurred at the hands of translators. The majority of the earliest translators were Christian Syrians, who were more physicians than philosophers. They projected their own religious considerations into their translations. Ḥunayn b. Isḥāq (d. 260/873), for instance – following other Eastern

[761] For an overview of the scholarship on the description of Aristotle as interpreted by the Arabs and of the important texts of Aristotle, including pseudo-Aristotelian writings, see Hans Daiber, "Salient Trends of the Arabic Aristotle," *The Ancient Tradition in Christian and Islamic Hellenism: Studies on the Transmission of Greek Philosophy and Sciences*, eds. Gerhard Endress and Remke Kruk (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997): 29-41. For a survey of the wide-ranging texts of classical antiquity translated into Arabic during the earliest period of the translation movement, see Rosenthal, *The Classical Heritage in Islam*, trans. Emile and Jenny Marmorstein (London, 1975). For the same topic, see also Badawī, *La Transmission de la Philosophie Grecque au Monde Arabe* (Paris, 1987).

[762] One might include the Hermetic writings in the same category. Muslim thinkers became aware of these writings mainly through the translations and expositions of Thābit b. Qurrah (d. 288/901) and his son Sinān. Thābit was a member of the Ḥarrānian Ṣābians whose religion, in addition to Hermeticism, was an eclecticism consisting of the heathen religion of Syria mixed with some Hellenic and Persian elements. This Hermetic corpus also contributed to the idea that religion and philosophy teach the same fundamental principles. For this subjet matter see, A. A. Afīfī, "The Influence of Hermetic Literature on Moslem Thought," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 13.4 (1951): 840-855.

Christian translators – is said to have eliminated all traces of paganism from the works of the ancients. Througout their renderings, these translators simply replaced the pagan gods with the "one God and His angels" of the monotheistic religions.[763] They further transformed the pagan tradition of believing in the eternity of the world into a monotheistic creationism.[764] Accordingly, Muslim philosophers initially received a kind of artificially unified Greek tradition, particularly through Syriac intermediaries. In this regard, thanks to its highly inclusive nature, Neoplatonism provided for Muslims a system of thought compatible with the fundamental monotheistic religious principles. It took the *falāsifah* some time, though not too long, to clarify the authentic philosophical personalities and ideas of the Greek antiquity.

In the earliest days of their reception of the Greek philosophical heritage, the *falāsifah*, in general, regarded Empedocles, Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle as five pillars of *ḥikmah* and this *ḥikmah* was, in their view, originally derived from the prophetic niche (*mishkāt al-nubuwwah*). They recurrently characterized these ancient philosophers with praiseworthy religious terms, including *ḥakīm* (in the case of all five personalities), *zāhid* (i.e., ascetic, in the case of Socrates), and *ilāhī* (i.e., divine, in the case of Plato). Both Plato and Aristotle, for instance, are said to have talked constantly about God and the necessity of being in His service by way of worshipping, thanking, and praising Him with utmost conscientiousness.[765] Accordingly, the *falāsifah* believed that the primary motive of the earliest philosophers for initiating *falsafah* was religiously

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[763] Gotthard Strohmaier, "Ḥunayn b. Isḥāq" in *EI²*.

[764] Abū al-Ḥasan Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-'Āmirī, *Kitāb al-Amad 'alā al-abad*, ed. and trans. Everett Rowson, *American Oriental Series* 70 (New Haven, 1988): 41.

[765] Ibn Fātik, 129-130 and 185-186, respectively.

oriented, for the former were trying to reach the knowledge of the utmost principle/s of beings created by God (*mabda'/mabādi' al-mawjūdāt allatī khalaqahā Allāh*).[766] This belief is also self-evident in the *falāsifah*'s attitude that unlike their eager embracement of metaphysical ideas to establish the existence of God philosophically, they did not, in general, work intensely on articulating the atheistic (*dahrī*) arguments of the past. What Muslim thinkers received was, then, a kind of eclecticism consisting of diverse Greek philosophical schools and religious ideas of the East that existed before the appearance of Islam. Gradually, when the translation movement reached a relatively mature level, Muslims attained a better understanding of the Greek heritage and became fully aware of its various and distinct philosophical trends and doctrines. It was only with Ibn Rushd (d. 595/1198), for instance, that Aristotelian metaphysics was detached from Neoplatonic emanationist cosmology.

Historians of Arabic philosophy articulate the reception of the Greek heritage by the earliest Arabic-speaking intellectuals. Al-'Āmirī (d. 381/992), Abū Sulaymān al-Sijistānī al-Manṭiqī (d. *ca.* 377/988), Ibn Juljul (d. *ca.* 385/996), Sā'id al-Andalūsī (d. 462/1070), al-Qifṭī (646/1248), and Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah (d. 668/1270) are among the leading historians in this connection. Their works use the term *ḥukamā'* as a generic name in the sense of "sages", non-Muslim and Muslim alike, to describe both the scientists and philosophers of the past. Thus the *ḥukamā'* of antiquity are included in the subject matter of the fields of the history of philosophy, religion, and the sciences all at the same time. But using this term, it is also obvious that historians of Islamic

[766] Abū Sulaymān al-Sijistānī, *Muntakhab Ṣiwān al-ḥikmah*, ed. D. M. Dunlop (The Hague, 1979): 3-5.

philosophy put a special emphasis on the wise personalities and actions of the past, in addition to their theoretical knowledge.

I. The "Five Pillars of *Ḥikmah*": *ḥikmah* in the land of Greece

Two Qur'anic figures emerge out of the records of Muslim historians of philosophy with respect to the origins of philosophy, namely Luqmān and Idrīs. The former is affiliated directly with the beginning of the Greek philosophical heritage, while the latter is identified with Hermes who is in fact a much more complicated figure relating to the beginning of almost every branch of knowledge. It was a convention among the earliest translators of Greek philosophical works to render the Greek word "sophia" as "*ḥikmah*", or to Arabize the whole compound word as "*falsafah*" and "*faylasūf*". Muslim historians state that the ancient Greeks used to call their scientists (*'ulamā'*) *falāsifah*, whose singular is *faylasūf*, meaning "lover of *ḥikmah* (*muḥibb al-ḥikmah*)". These philosophers were the most respected and knowledgeable people of their time, for they cultivated all the branches of knowledge (*funūn al-ḥikmah*), including logical, mathematical, physical, metaphysical, and political sciences.[767]

The earliest extant work by a Muslim author presenting a relatively full-fledged historical account with regard to the origin of Greek philosophy is al-'Āmirī's *al-Amad 'alā al-abad* in which he attempts to justify the study of philosophy in the Muslim milieu and to reconcile the Greek philosophical idea of the soul with the Islamic doctrine of the Afterlife.[768] Al-'Āmirī studied under Abū Zayd al-Balkhī (d. 322/934), who in turn was

[767] Ṣā'id b. Aḥmad al-Andalūsī, *Kitāb tabaqāt al-umam*, ed. Louis Cheikho (Beirut, 1912): 20-21.

[768] Everett Rowson worked on *al-Amad* for his Ph.D. dissertation under F. Rosenthal in Yale University (1982) and then revised, edited, translated, and published it with a commentary. Througout this section, my

one of the most able students of the earliest Muslim philosophical authority al-Kindī. Al-Āmirī's conception of Greek philosophical tradition, therefore, is quite representative as regards the approaches of the earliest Muslim intellectuals to this tradition.

Before going into the history of Greek philosophy in detail, al-'Āmirī introduces a brief sketch pertaining to the prehistorical scientific activities of mankind in the Near East. He asserts that the Babylonians needed the science of astronomy (*'ilm al-nujūm*) to aid in agriculture and navigation; therefore, they applied themselves to developing the knowledge of the positions of the stars. The Egyptians needed a reliable knowledge of geometry to protect their cultivated fields against the rise of the water of the Nile, so they concentrated themselves on knowing how to measure the land. The Syrians, meanwhile, were in need of the science of medicine, because of the frequency of plagues afflicting the people of that region. For such practical reasons, the peoples of the Near East improved themselves in particular sciences depending on their basic daily needs. Al-'Āmirī further states that the land of ancient Greece was next to greater Syria (*Shām*), and that this region was also inhabited by the Israelites who had a long unbroken tradition of prophethood. As for the people of ancient Greece themselves, they were idol-worshippers, except for a few individuals who used to visit the Israelite prophets there to interact with them.[769]

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references will be to the Arabic text edited by Rowson, but I should also acknowledge that I have compared my own translations to those of Rowson and benefited from them. Rowson also sheds light on the historical origins of al-'Āmirī's accounts in Greek and Syriac sources prior to Islam. Since I am mainly interested in the reception of the Greek philosophical heritage by the earliest Muslim intellectuals, rather than in tracing their arguments back to the Greek or Syriac origins, I do not see a need to repeat Rowson's findings.

[769] Al-'Āmirī, 66-67. In fact, al-'Āmirī describes the Greeks as simply "worshippers" (*'ubbād*), but the context implies that their religion was not a monotheistic type. I have used the word "idol-worshippers" on the basis of a further description provided by Ṣā'id al-Andalūsī, who says they were star-worshippers (*mu'aẓẓim li-al-kawākib*) and idol-worshippers (*dā'in bi-'ibādat al-aṣnām*). Al-Andalūsī, 20.

According to al-'Āmirī's reports, the first person to whom people attributed *ḥikmah* was Luqmān the Ḥakīm, mentioned in Qur'an 31:12. He was a contemporary of the prophet David, both of whom lived in the land of greater Syria (*bilād al-Shām*). It is said that Empedocles used to keep company with Luqmān and learn from his *ḥikmah* (wisdom). When Empedocles returned to Greece, he started speaking of this teaching, but he expressed it in a language that, if one were to take it literally, one would find elements in it that could be understood as conflicting with monotheistic religious beliefs concerning the Hereafter (*ma'ād*). The Greeks used to attribute *ḥikmah* to Empedocles on account of his former affiliation with Luqmān, and he was the first Greek to be called such.[770]

Al-'Āmirī states that, after Empedocles, Pythagoras was another Greek personality to whom people attributed *ḥikmah*. Pythagoras kept company with Solomon's disciples in Egypt, who had moved there from greater Syria. Prior to that, Pythagoras had studied geometry (*handasah*) under the Egyptians. He then learned the physical and metaphysical/divine sciences (*al-'ulūm al-ṭabī'iyyah wa-al-'ulūm al-ilāhiyyah*) from the disciples of Solomon. Afterwards, he returned to Greece and transferred these three sciences, i.e., geometry, physics, and the science of religion (*'ilm al-dīn*), to that land. In addition, by virtue of his own brilliance, he discovered the science of melodies and systematized them under ratios and numbers. He claimed that he

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[770] Al-'Āmirī, 70. The convention of associating the earliest Greek philosophical personalities with Luqmān is followed by later Muslim intellectuals as well. In his *Muqaddimah*, for instance, Ibn Khaldūn mentions that philosophical sciences are said to have passed from Luqmān the Ḥakīm and his pupils to Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Alexander of Aphrodisias, and Themistius, and others in succession. Ibn Khaldūn, III: 1088-1089.

had benefited from the niche of prophethood (*mishkāt al-nubuwwah*) in acquiring these sciences.[771]

Al-'Āmirī reports that, after Pythagoras, Socrates came to be recognized by *ḥikmah*. Socrates was a follower of Pythagoras. He specialized in metaphysical/divine sciences (*al-ma'ālim al-ilāhiyyah*) and turned away from worldly pleasures. He publicly proclaimed his disagreement with the Greeks on religion and challenged the leaders of the polytheists with rational arguments and logical proofs. These leaders provoked the masses against him and forced their king to put him to death. For the sake of acting in accordance with their demand, the king merely put Socrates in prison, but at the end, the king could not resist their pressure and had Socrates poisoned.[772]

According to al-'Āmirī's accounts, Plato was the subsequent Greek figure to whom people attributed *ḥikmah* and to embrace the *ḥikmah* of Pythagoras and Socrates. He was of a noble lineage among his society. Unlike Socrates, Plato did not limit himself to the metaphysical/divine sciences. Rather, he combined the physical and mathematical sciences with them. He wrote famous books, although he used a symbolic and obscure language in them. Towards the end of his life, he authorized his advanced and most able students and associates to teach his classes, and isolated himself from people in order to devote himself exclusively to the worship of his Lord.[773]

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[771] Al-'Āmirī, 70. For similar accounts with respect to Pythagoras' reception of *ḥikmah* see, Ibn Fātik, 52-55.

[772] Al-'Āmirī, 70.

[773] Al-'Āmirī, 72. Ibn Fātik reports that after his master Socrates' death, Plato went to Egypt to learn from the associates of Pythagoras. Then he returned to Greece and taught his *ḥikmah*. Ibn Fātik, 126-127. Ibn Fātik also reports that Aristotle used to express his master Plato's *ḥikmah* in a symbolic and obscure language. He used to speak of it ambigiously so that only those who possess *ḥikmah* could understand his master's teachings. Ibn Fātik, 128. Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah, mentions a book dealing with the unity of God,

Al-'Āmirī reports that Aristotle succeeded Plato as the next possessor of *ḥikmah*. He was the teacher of Alexander, who studied under Plato for approximately twenty years in order to learn *ḥikmah*. Because of his extraordinary intelligence, people used to call him "spiritual" (*rūḥānī*) in his youth; and, similarly, Plato used to call him "intellect" (*'aql*). Aristotle authored books on logic and made them an instrument of the sciences. On account of this accomplishment, people called him "logician" (*ṣāḥib al-manṭiq*). It was he who organized the topics of physics and metaphysics and composed a separate book on each topic. In his time, Alexander firmly established his authority and polytheism disappeared from the land of the Greeks.[774]

Al-'Āmirī concludes that these five figures were deservingly characterized as *ḥukamā'* and that no one who came after them was called *ḥakīm*. Instead, to every one of them was ascribed an art or a way of life. For instance, Hippocrates, Homer, and Archimedes were physician (*ṭabīb*), poet (*shā'ir*), and geometer (*muhandis*), respectively.[775]

In this context al-'Āmirī relates an interesting story indicating the traditional Islamic conception of *ḥikmah* as a combination of knowledge and action. According to his narration, having composed numerous books, Galen wanted people to attribute

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entitled *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*, in his list of Plato's works. Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah, *'Uyūn al-anbā' fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbā'*, ed. Nizār Riḍā (Beirut, 1965): 86.

[774] Al-'Āmirī, 74. See also Ibn Fātik, 178-184.

[775] Al-'Āmirī, 74. Al-'Āmirī's account of the five Greek pillars of *ḥikmah* was quoted by historians of Muslim intellectual history among the following generations. We find the same report with minor modifications in *Muntakhab Ṣiwān al-ḥikmah*, which is a selection of Abū Sulaymān al-Sijistānī's *Ṣiwān al-ḥikmah* – a work did not came to our day in its original format. In his quotation, al-Sijistānī clearly acknowledges his source. Al-Sijistānī, 5-7. Ṣā'id al-Andalūsī reports the same materials, but without acknowledging his source, neither al-'Āmirī nor al-Sijistānī. Al-Andalūsī, 21-27. For the same account, see also al-Shahristānī, II: 72-100; Ibn al-Qifṭī, *Tārīkh al-ḥukamā'*, ed. Julius Lippert (Leipzig, 1903): 15-17, 27-29, 198, 258; Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah, 61-62, 70, 91.

ḥikmah to him and thus to call him "*Ḥakīm*" ("Sage") instead of "Physician" (*ṭabīb*). The people found this request inappropriate, saying that, even though he was knowledgeable in medical topics, he did not have a firm conviction in metaphysical matters, for he was still in doubt as to whether or not the world was created in time, whether or not the Hereafter was real, and whether the soul was a substance or an accident. They considered such doubts as imperfections that would prevent him from attaining divine *ḥikmah* and thus from being called *ḥakīm* in the proper sense of the word.[776] Likewise, al-'Āmirī disagrees with his contemporaries who attribute *ḥikmah* to Abū Bakr al-Rāzī (d. *ca.* 307/925) on the basis of the latter's proficiency in medicine in spite of his erroneous convictions in metaphysical matters, such as his belief in the five eternal principles.[777] Al-'Āmirī strengthens his argument with examples, relating that, even though his own master Abū Zayd al-Balkhī was a competent scholar in numerous kinds of sciences and a true believer in religious matters, he would not allow anybody to attribute *ḥikmah* to him. Reciting the Qur'anic verse 2:269, al-Balkhī would humbly portray himself as an imperfect person who was not worthy of such a respectful description. In his view, one had to go into deep contemplation regarding the meaninng of this verse before ascribing *ḥikmah* to anyone. Al-'Āmirī notes that al-Balkhī was simply following his own teacher, al-Kindī, in this respect.[778]

In addition to the aforementioned historical account, historians of Greek philosophy in the Arab world also talk about the personal conceptions of *ḥikmah* of those

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[776] Al-'Āmirī, 74.

[777] Ibid., 74.

[778] Ibid., 76.

earliest figures. Pythagoras, for instance, is said to have defined *ḥikmah* as "the knowledge of the essential natures of the things that exist eternally in a single state."[779] He used to prevent his students from writing down *ḥikmah* on papers, saying that *ḥikmah* needs to be kept alive by way of action and that it is not to be just put in books,[780] for, in his view, *ḥikmah* is "the medicine of souls (*ṭibb al-arwāḥ*),"[781] and a more praiseworthy thing in God's presence is the actions/deeds (*af'āl*) of a *ḥakīm*, not his mere speech (*lisān*).[782] When he himself would speak of *ḥikmah*, Pythagoras would express it symbolically to conceal it from undeserving and ignorant people.[783]

In Islamic primary sources on the Greek philosophical heritage, Pythagoras is portrayed as a sincere believer in religious and moral principles. He emphasizes that pure *ḥikmah* belongs solely to God. According to his understanding, love for *ḥikmah* is dependent on love for God (*maḥabbat Allāh*), and whoever loves God acts in accordance with the way He loves things to be. Whoever acts in such a manner thus comes close to God, and whoever comes close to Him has attained eternal salvation.[784] Just like his role model Empedocles, Pythagoras believed that, above this physical world, there exists a spiritual world (*'ālam rūḥānī*), a world of light (*nūrānī*), whose beauty and splendor cannot be apprehended by intelligence/reason (*'aql*) alone, though the pure soul (*al-nafs*

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[779] Al-Sijistānī, 30.

[780] Abū al-Faraj b. Hindū, *al-Kalim al-rūḥāniyah min al-ḥikam al-Yūnāniyah*, ed. Muḥammad Jalūb al-Farḥān (Beirut, 2001): 157. Ibn Fātik reports the same idea with respect to Socrates who also did not like to record and leave *ḥikmah* merely in pages. Ibn Fātik, 82.

[781] Ibn Hindū, 160.

[782] Ibn Fātik, 62.

[783] Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah, 63.

[784] Ibn Fātik, 62.

al-zakiyyah) longs for it. A person may be endowed with access to the spiritual world only after purifying his soul from all blameworthy moral characteristics, such as vanity, arrogance, hypocrisy, envy, and the like. Only then may such a person become worthy of the knowledge of the spiritual world and divine *ḥikmah* (*al-ḥikmah al-ilāhiyyah*).[785]

Similarly, according to the records of Muslim historians, Socrates spoke of *ḥikmah* only symbolically[786] and defined it as, "the means (*sullam*) to reach God."[787] Following Pythagoras, he did not approve of writing down *ḥikmah* on the page on account of respect for its sacred purity. In his view, such an action could result in giving *ḥikmah* to undeserving people.[788]

As for Plato's conception of *ḥikmah*, it was not any different from that of Pythagoras or Socrates. He defined *ḥikmah* as "the light of the soul (*ḍiyā' al-nafs*),"[789] and said, "A person who only speaks of *ḥikmah* is not a *ḥakīm*, but rather, the *ḥakīm* is one who puts *ḥikmah* in action."[790] Like his master Socrates, Plato embraced the teachings of Pythagoras, but he did not become well-known for his *ḥikmah* until after the death of his teacher, even though he was a man of noble origin and his family was famous for its scholars. He was knowledgeable in all the branches of philosophy and wrote many illustrious books on metaphysical and physical subjects. He used to lecture

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[785] Al-Andalūsī, 22. See also, Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah, 61-62.

[786] Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah, 71.

[787] Ibn Hindū, 167. For the same account see, Ibn Fātik, 91.

[788] Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah, 70-71.

[789] Ibn Fātik, 130.

[790] Al-Sijistānī, 38. See also Ibn Fātik, 141 and 174. Ibn Fātik further reports Plato as saying, "Do not be a *ḥakim* through your speech, but through your action; for *ḥikmah* through [merely] speech does not continue, but *ḥikmah* through actions is beneficial [even] in the world to come." Ibn Fātik, 153.

his students while walking, on account of which they became known as Peripatetics or pedestrians (*mashā'ūn*). As noted above, towards the end of his life, he authorized his most able students and associates to teach his classes and isolated himself from people to devote his life to the worship of his Lord.[791]

In addition to the epistemological or philosophical function of *ḥikmah*, Plato underlines that it is also a means of purifying the soul and making its possessor similar to the eternal Cause (*al-'illah al-qadīmah*), since "the goal of *ḥikmah* (*ghāyat al-ḥikmah*) is adorning human souls and warding off vices from them."[792]

Accounts in the writings of Muslim scholars on the history of Greek philosophy characterize Aristotle by similar features. He is said to have written a book on the unity of God (*tawḥīd*) and entitled it "Godship/Lordship" (*rubūbiyyah*).[793] For him, *ḥikmah* was the most valuable thing and, accordingly, the philosophical method (*manṭiq*) to attain it had to be as precise and perfect as possible. Such a method had to be free of all kinds of imperfections, including error (*zalal*), confusion (*labs*) or uncertainty (*shubhah*).[794] Aristotle used to advise Alexander constantly to turn away from this-worldly things and aspire to eternal happiness.[795] It is reported that Aristotle used to say, "Drugs cure bodies and *ḥikmah* cures souls."[796] He also said, "The virtues of the soul are four, corresponding to which there are four virtues of the body: to *ḥikmah* (wisdom) of the soul corresponds

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[791] Al-Andalūsī, 23.

[792] Quoted in Gutas, *Greek Wisdom Literature in Arabic Translation*, 116.

[793] Ibn Juljul, *Tabaqāt al-aṭibbā' wa-al-ḥukamā'*, ed. Fu'ād Sayyid (Cairo, 1955): 25.

[794] Ibn Fātik, 180. See also Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah, 89.

[795] Al-Andalūsī, 26-27.

[796] Quoted in Gutas, *Greek Wisdom Literature in Arabic Translation*, 164.

perfection of the body; to justice, beauty; to courage, strength; and to temperance, health."[797]

Muslim historians of Greek philosophy describe the aforementioned intellectuals as the most celebrated among the ancient Greeks and as highly venerable figures who served humanity with their works and guided it with their light.[798]

The abovementioned accounts dealing with the history of the Greek philosophical legacy indicate that in the early period of *falsafah* activities, Arabic-speaking thinkers thought of the personalities of antiquity as the successors to prophetic teachings. The term *ḥikmah* has a central position within this conception. Knowledge of *ḥikmah* represents knowledge of the true nature of things and derives from the prophetic institution by way of Luqmān and David. It is true that the Qur'an does not attribute prophethood to Luqmān, but only *ḥikmah*. On the basis of this fact, one may argue that, at least in the case of Luqmān, *ḥikmah* and prophethood were separate, as he was given a non-prophetic *ḥikmah*; after all, according to Islamic tradition, even though he was given a choice between prophethood and *ḥikmah*, he took the latter. But still, his *ḥikmah* was a God-given thing, not an individual achievement. Being given *ḥikmah* in return required of him thankfulness to God (31:12). Furthermore, Muslim writings associate Luqmān closely with David. The Luqmān figure in the historical accounts, therefore, does not disprove the argument for the prophetic origin of *ḥikmah*. But rather, he can be taken as an embodiment of *ḥikmah* resulting from praiseworthy religious and moral characteristics. Luqmān's legendary wisdom is reflected in the words and actions of

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[797] Quoted in Gutas, *Greek Wisdom Literature in Arabic Translation*, 166.

[798] Al-Andalūsī, 31.

Empedocles and his successors in *ḥikmah*. According to Muslim historians, in addition to David, the earliest Greek philosophers were in contact with other Israelite prophets and their followers. They historically connect the Greek philosophical tradition to *falsafah* activities in Islamic times.

Alongside the philosophical literature in the technical sense of the word, Muslims inherited another genre of Greek writings, namely gnomologia, containing ethical sayings and anecdotes attributed to leading philosophers of antiquity. *Ḥikmah* appears in these writings with a different connotation. Unlike strictly philosophical literature addressing only the intellectual elite, such ethically-oriented *adab* collections were much more popular in the proper sense of the term, for, before Islam, Arabs were already familiar with this kind of aphoristic wisdom literature (*ḥikmiyyāt/ḥikam*) in the forms of proverbs (*amthāl*), legends (*ayyām*), poetry (*shi'r*), etc. They, for instance, knew of Luqmān in this context, as I have noted in previous chapters. Thus, they translated and welcomed Greek gnomologia alongside philosophical literature and this gnomic literature was in fact also responsible for certain distorted representations of the ideas and personalities of Greek philosophers.[799] But at the same time, we should acknowledge the great contribution of such works to the Islamic intellectual world, for, by propagating largely ethical sayings, they also helped popularize philosophical concepts and figures.

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[799] In this context, the following figures are among the leading authors who cite sayings from Greek, Arab, Persian, and Indian sages and whose works are known to us today: *Ādāb al-falāsifah*, Ḥunayn b. Isḥāq; *Ṣiwān al-ḥikmah fī tawārīkh al-ḥukamʾ*, Abū Sulaymān al-Sijistānī; *al-Fihrist*, Ibn al-Nadīm; *al-Saʿādah wa-al-isʿād*, al-ʿĀmirī; *Ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbāʾ wa-al-ḥukamāʾ*, Ibn Juljul; *al-Kalim al-rūḥāniyyah fī al-ḥikam al-yūnānīyah*, Ibn Hindū; *al-Ḥikmah al-khālidah*, Ibn Miskawayh; *Ṭabaqāt al-umam*, Sāʿid al-Andalūsī; *Mukhtār al-ḥikam*, Mubashshir b. Fātik; and *ʿUyūn al-anbāʾ fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbāʾ*, Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿah. For Greek gnomic literature and its translation into Arabic see, Gutas, *Greek Wisdom Literature in Arabic Translation*.

The Alexandrian school was the channel through which gnomic material reached the Arabs. The members of this school compiled introductions to philosophy and ethical handbooks. They also re-copied and re-arranged other collections of sayings. This school thus represents an important aspect of the last stage of Hellenism. According to the testimony of the Arab historians, the Alexandrian school was ultimately transferred to Antioch by the caliph 'Umar II (reigned 717-720).[800]

Therefore, in addition to associating the origin of philosophy historically with the prophetic institution, Muslim historians of Greek philosophy also characterize the leading philosophers of antiquity by personal, moral, and religious qualities in line with those of the *ḥakīm* outlined in my previous chapters. These philosophers, for instance, combine their knowledge with their actions and do not give *ḥikmah* to undeserving people, to which end they use a symbolic language to speak of it.

Muslim authors on Greek philosophy state that, after Aristotle, a group of philosophers came and followed in his footsteps, making known his works as well as elaborating them. Themistius, Alexander of Aphrodisias, and Porphyry were the most well-known and competent of that group. Later on, in the Islamic period (during the Abbāsid caliphate), the Aristotelian philosophical tradition was maintained by other intellectuals such as Qusṭā b. Lūqā, who was a contemporary of al-Kindī.[801] It was with al-Kindī, however, that real philosophical activity started in the Muslim lands.

II. The fountain of *ḥikmah*: Hermes as "The Father of the *Ḥukamā*'"

[800] Quoted in Gutas, *Greek Wisdom Literature in Arabic Translation*, 457-458.

[801] Al-Andalūsī, 27.

Alongside Luqmān and the "five pillars of *ḥikmah*" (Empedocles, Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle), Muslim historians record another figure as a main channel of *ḥikmah*. This is Hermes, the Father of Sages (*abū al-ḥukamā'*). He is a key figure with respect to the historical contact between religion and philosophy, for historians identify him recurrently with the Qur'anic Idrīs who is described as "a true man, a prophet" (19:56) whom God raised up to "a high place" (19:57), while at the same time, he is depicted as the father of the *ḥukamā'* in the writings of Muslim historians of ancient times. Thus, in his personality, Hermes combines both kinds of knowledge, and this belief follows from the notion that philosophy originated from the niche of prophetic revelation (*mishkāt al-nubuwwah*). Such a combination facilitated the integration of Greek science and philosophy into the Islamic world-view, for Muslims could regard this intellectual heritage within their extended prophetic tradition. Hermes is also considered to be the founder of the sciences extending from Jābir b. Ḥayyan's (d. *ca.* 184/800) alchemical studies to Abū Bakr al-Rāzi's chemical works. In addition, he was the earliest authority in Suhrawardī's (d. 587/1191) philosophy of illumination (*ḥikmat al-ishrāq*).[802]

The figure of Hermes left a profound and enigmatic mark upon the scientific and philosophical history of mankind in Muslim as well as non-Muslim lands. In the following lines, I will not try to examine the whole subject of Hermeticism and Hermetic writings, which also include occult sciences, i.e., magic, alchemy, talismans, astrology, and the like.[803] (In this respect, almost everything that has to do with supernatural

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[802] Suhrawardī calls Hermes "the father of the philosophers (*wālid al-ḥukamā'*)" and the ultimate authority in true philosophy. Shihāb al-Dīn Yaḥyā al-Suhrawardī, *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*, ed. and trans. John Walbridge and Hossein Ziai (Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1999): 2, 3, and 107-108.

[803] Ibn al-Nadīm, for instance, lists twenty-two treatises of Hermes: thirteen in alchemy, four in talismans, and five in astrology. Ibn al-Nadīm, 510, 448, 387, respectively.

powers and wisdom is originally related to Hermes in one way or another.) Instead, I am only interested in the way the historians of the Muslim intellectual tradition receive and treat him in his relation to *ḥikmah* within the boundries of my own present investigation. Otherwise, Arabic Hermetic literature is related to diverse traditions in the ancient Near East. On the one hand, it includes the pagan and mythological legacies of the Greeks and Ḥarrānians, while, on the other hand, it is connected to the religious historical narrations of the Jewish, Christian and Muslim peoples, not to mention that a great deal of Hermetic literature came to the Arabs through Middle Persian intermediaries, which left a Sasanian imprint on it.[804]

Muslim Historians list three historical persons called Hermes.[805] Hermes the First was Hermes Trismegistus (*al-muthallath bi-al-ḥikmah*), or, according to Abū Ma'shar's

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[804] Arabic bio-bibliographical works are full of Hermetic accounts. See, for instance, Ḥunayn b. Isḥāq, *Ādāb al-falāsifah*, abridged by Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. Ibrāhīm al-Anṣārī, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī (Kuwait, 1985): 133-135; Al-Sijistānī, 63-66; Ibn Juljul, 5-10; al-Andalūsī, 18-19, 39-40; Ibn al-Qifṭī, 1-7; Ibn Fātik, 7-26.

[805] The famous astrologer Abū Ma'shar al-Balkhī's (d. 273/886) *Kitāb al-ulūf* is the main source of the Muslim historians to uncover Hermes' identity. The most complete account is preserved in Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah's *'Uyūn al-anbā' fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbā'*, which was originally based on Ibn Juljul's narration. Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah, 31-33. For the same narration see also, Al-Sijistānī, 63-64; Ibn Juljul, 5-10; al-Andalūsī, 18-19.
In his book *The Thousands of Abū Ma'shar*, David Pingree reconstructs Abū Ma'shar's astronomy, astrology, and his conception of the history of science through fragments and later quotations found in his three lost works, namely *Kitāb al-Ulūf*, *Zīj al-hazārāt* and *Kiṭāb Ikhtilāf al-zījāt*. As far as the biographies of the three Hermes are concerned, however, Pingree does not provide any additional original materials, other than translating Ibn Juljul's narration from Abū Ma'shar in comparison with that of Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah. David Pingree, *The Thousands of Abū Ma'shar* (London, 1968): 14-18.
Historically speaking, it is not easy to identify the Hermes figure with absolute certainty. On the one hand, Hermes is the Hellenistic name of the Egyptian god Thoth, on the other hand, he is the author of scientific, philosophical, astrological, alchemical and magical works. Muslim writers transformed his godhead and divided his characteristics into three legendary individuals: Idrīs of the ante-diluvian days, Hermes the Babylonian (*al-Bābilī*), and Hermes of the post-diluvian days. Martin Plessner, "Hirmis" in *EI²* and Plessner, "Hermes Trismegistus and Arab Science," *Studia Islamica* 2 (1954): 45-59. Ibn al-Nadīm seems to believe that the second and third Hermes were in fact one person who was born and lived for some time in Babylon and then traveled to Egypt. Ibn al-Nadīm, 507-508. Afīfī, on the other hand, argues that a great deal of myth fabricated around the personality of Hermes in Egyptian and Greek sources underwent a certain modification and elaboration at the hands of Jewish and Oriental writers. He asserts that the identification of Hermes with Idrīs or Enoch owes its origin to such a Jewish background, which was taken up by Muslim historians uncritically. Afīfī concludes that the first and second personalities are mythical

(d. 273/886) expression, "the one upon whom the threefold Grace was bestowed (*al-muthallath bi-al-ni'am*)."[806] He lived in Egypt before the Flood. In fact, the meaning of Hermes is appellative (*laqab*), as is the case of Caesar and Khusraw. The Persians identify this personality with Hūshang, meaning the just or righteous (*dhū 'adl*), while the Ḥarrānians argue that he is the same personality whose prophethood (*nubuwwah*) is mentioned in their tradition. The Persians assert that his grandfather was Kayūmarth, the Persian name for Adam. The Hebrews, for their part, say that he is Akhnūkh (Enoch), i.e., Idrīs in Arabic.[807]

According to Ibn Uṣaybi'ah's statements on the authority of Abū Ma'shar, this Hermes was the first to speak of celestial things (*ashyā' 'ulwīyyah*), to build sanctuaries to praise God therein, and to establish the science of medicine. He wrote many books of rhythmic poems pertaining to the knowledge of terrestrial and celestial things in order to address his contemporaries. He was also the first to foresee and warn people of the coming of the Flood as a heavenly plague. Since he was afraid that knowledge (*'ilm*) might be lost and disappear from the world with the Flood, he built temples on the upper mountains and engraved the essences of the sciences and crafts on their walls for the

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and legendary figures, rather than actual men and prophets; the first one was a creation of the Jewish mind, while the second one was invented by the heathen people of Ḥarrān. As for the third one, he was the real Egyptian or Greco-Egyptian Hermes whom Arabs knew relatively well and whose writings (or those attributed to him) they knew much better. Afīfī, 854-855. The Hermetic written corpus came into being in ancient Alexandria, where the Egyptian and Greek traditions were combined. Before this mixture, no school was known as Hermeticism. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Hermes and Hermetic Writings in the Islamic World", *Islamic studies: essays on law and society, the sciences, and philosophy and Sufism* (Beirut: 1967), 64. For further details see, Ibn al-Qifṭī, 1-7; Ibn Fātik, 7-10.
For an investigation of the figure of Hermes Trismegistus and the texts attributed to him in the Arabic tradition with a special emphasis on the transmission of Greek Hermetica into Arabic, see Kevin Thomas van Bladel, *Hermes Arabicus*, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation (Yale University, 2004).

[806] Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah, 31. Ibn Fātik lists these three Graces as prophethood (*nubuwwah*), *ḥikmah*, and kingdom (*mulk*). Ibn Fātik, 11.

[807] Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah 31-32.

benefit of later generations.[808] Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah's report concludes that earlier Muslim scholarly authorities held Idrīs to be the first to study books, to think about sciences, to sew clothes and to wear them. They also believed that God revealed thirty-pages of the Book to him and exalted him in a high place, as the Qur'an mentions in 19:57.[809]

Hermes the Second, as Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah narrates from Abū Ma'shar, lived after the Flood in the city of Babylon of Chaldeans. He had excellent knowledge in medicine and philosophy. He was also knowledgeable in the essences of numbers, as he was associated with Pythagoras the arithmetician. This Hermes renewed medicine, philosophy and arithmetic as studied in ante-devulian times. And this Chaldean city was the city of the philosophers among the people of the East, their philosophers being the first to establish an organized social order.[810]

Hermes the Third, as Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah quotes again from Abū Ma'shar, lived in Egypt after the Flood. He was a physician and philosopher, was knowledgeable concerning deadly drugs and noxious animals, excelled in the art of chemistry/alchemy and talked about many techniques, such as the manufacture of glass, clay and the like. He was also the master of Asclepius, who lived in greater Syria.[811]

As far as Hermes' particular understanding of *ḥikmah* is concerned, Islamic sources record him as saying that *ḥikmah* is the origin of happiness.[812] His description of *ḥikmah* in these sources as "God-fearingness/consciousness (*taqwā*)" reminds us of the

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[808] Ibid., 32.

[809] Ibid., 32. See also al-Andalūsī, 39.

[810] Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah, 32. See also al-Andalūsī, 40.

[811] Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah, 32-33.

[812] Ibn Fātik, 17.

previously cited prophetic saying that defines the fear of God as the beginning of *ḥikmah* (*ra's al-ḥikmah makhāfat Allāh*). Likewise, Hermes is said to have stated that God-fearingness/consciousness is the greatest *ḥikmah* and the key to the attainment of all kinds of knowledge of the realities of things.[813] Muslim historians report Hermes to have said that the life of the soul resides in *ḥikmah* and *ḥikmah* resides in belief in God. *Ḥikmah* and belief are inseparable; whoever possesses one of them possesses the other as well, and whoever lacks one of them, lacks the other as well.[814]

Having visited the writings of Muslim historians on Greek philosophy and its reception by the earliest Muslim philosophers as Islamic *ḥikmah*, as well as their writings on Hermes in relation to this concept, I would now like to examine more concrete elaborations of *ḥikmah* as found in the works of three major philosophical figures from the formative period of Islamic philosophy. I will examine their discussions in chronological order, i.e., al-Kindī, al-Fārābī, then Ibn Sīnā.

III. Al-Kindī (d. *ca.* 260/873): *ḥikmah* in the view of "The Philosopher of the Arabs"

In his *Kitāb al-ḥurūf*, al-Kindī cites six "canonical" definitions of *falsafah* provided by the ancients (*qudamā'*). 1) On the basis of its etymology, the ancients defined *falsafah* as "the love of wisdom (*ḥubb al-ḥikmah*); for 'philosopher (*faylasūf*)' is composed of 'philo' and 'sophia', which mean 'love' and 'wisdom', respectively."[815] 2) From the

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[813] Ibid., 12.

[814] Ibid., 15.

[815] Abū Yūsuf Ya'qūb b. Isḥāq al-Kindī, *Rasā'il al-Kindī al-falsafiyyah*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Hādī Abū Rīdah (Cairo, 1950): 172. I have changed al-Kindī's order in the list of the definitions and rearranged them. *Kitāb al-ḥudūd* has caught the attention of western scholarship for decades. Two studies deserve special treatment in this regard. One is S. M. Stern's article, "Notes on Al-Kindī's Treatise on Definitions," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1959): 32-43. The other is T. Z. Frank's Ph.D.

perspective of its real nature and aim, they said that philosophy is "the art of arts (*ṣinā'at al-ṣinā'āt*) and the science of sciences [or wisdom of wisdoms] (*ḥikmat al-ḥikam*)."[816] 3) With respect to its function or action (*fi'l*), they defined philosophy as "imitation of the actions of God (*al-tashabbuh bi-af'āl Allāh*) as much as is within man's capacity."[817] Al-Kindī notes that, by this definition, the ancients meant that man should be perfect in virtue (*kāmil al-faḍīlah*).[818] 4) According to their understanding, philosophy essentially refers to "the knowledge of eternal (*abadī*) and universal (*kullī*) things, of their essences (*i/anniyyāt*), of their quiddity (*mā'iyyah*), and of their causes (*'ilal*), as far as is within man's capacity."[819]

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dissertation under F. Rosenthal at Yale University. *Al-Kindī's Book of Definitions: its place in Arabic definition literature* (1975). Througout my translations from *Kitāb al-ḥudūd*, I have benefited from Frank's renderings as well.
The concept of "love (*maḥabbah*)" is quite interesting in the first definition because al-Kindī defines "love" as "the cause of the coming-together of things (*'illatu ijtimā'i al-ashyā'*)." Al-Kindī, *Rasā'il*, 168. *Maḥabbah*, in his view, further denotes "that which is sought by the soul (*maṭlūb al-nafs*)," and "the condition of the soul in which there is an attachment/attraction (*jadhb*) between the soul and a thing." Ibid., 175. The idea of "coming-together (*ijtimā'*)" in turn means "being naturally caused for love (*ma'lūl bi-al-ṭab'i li-al-maḥabbah*)." Ibid., 170.

[816] Ibid., 173.

[817] Ibid., 172. Apparently, this definition implies that such a "likeness" is based on possessing the knowledge of truth and the doing of good; for one of the essential characteristics of God is knowing the truth and doing good. Man's efforts to imitate God in this respect are then one of the basic expectations in philosophical inquiry. For an analysis of this definition, especially in the cases of al-Fārābī and Maimonides see, Lawrence Berman, "The Political Interpretation of the Maxim: The Purpose of Philosophy is the Imitation of God," *Studia Islamica* 15 (1961): 53-61.

[818] Al-Kindī, *Rasā'il*, 172.

[819] Ibid., 173. In addition to these four definitions, al-Kindī lists the following two definitions of philosophy provided by the ancients. 5) From the perspective of its function, they defined philosophy as "the concern with death" (*al-'ināyah bi-al-mawt*)." Al-Kindī explains this definition saying, "In their view, there are two kinds of death: the natural (*ṭabī'ī*), which occurs with the soul's leaving the use of the body (*tarku al-nafsi isti'māla al-badani*); and second, the putting to death of passions (*imātat al-shahawāt*). The latter is the death they aim at, for the death of passions is the path to virtue (*al-sabīl ilā al-faḍīlah*). For that reason, many of the notable ancients said, 'Pleasure (*ladhdhah*) is evil (*sharr*).' Necessarily, since there are two kinds of use for the soul (one sensible [*ḥissī*] and the other intellectual [*'aqlī*]), that which people call pleasure is what appears in the senses (*iḥsās*), and concern with sensual pleasures is a leaving of the use of the intellect" (172-173). 6) The ancients also defined philosophy as "man's knowledge of himself (*ma'rifat al-insān nafsahu*)." Al-Kindī finds this definition an extremely meaningful and comprehensive statement. He states that things are either bodies (*ajsām*) or not bodies. That which are not bodies are

From the perspective of ethics, following again the categorization of the Greeks, al-Kindī lists *ḥikmah* among the four human virtues (*al-faḍā'il al-insāniyyah*) which constitute praiseworthy human character. He divides human virtues into two primary kinds: the first is in the soul; the second is the effects coming from the soul, which the body encompasses. There are three virtues existing in the soul, namely, wisdom (*ḥikmah*), courage (*najdah*), and temperance (*'iffah*). As for the virtue that encompasses the effects coming from the soul, it is justice (*'adl*).[820] In such an ethical context, al-Kindī explains *ḥikmah* as,

> the virtue of the rational faculty (*al-quwwah al-nuṭqiyyah*), the knowledge of the universal things in their realities (*'ilm al-ashyā' al-kulliyyah bi-ḥaqā'iqihā*), and the employment (*isti'māl*) of those realities which must be employed.[821]

According to al-Kindī, therefore, *ḥikmah* has an epistemological as well as a practical dimension. Such a conception of *ḥikmah* fully conforms to the basic notion of *ḥikmah* introduced by the earliest scholars of Arabic language, Qur'anic exegeses, and Sufism, whose writings I have discussed in the previous chapters. In this context, al-Kindī believes that *falsafah* is an indispensable means to attain *ḥikmah*. His discussions in his most important – though we do not have a complete copy available to us today –

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either substances (*jawāhir*) or accidents (*a'rāḍ*). Man is body, soul, and accidents, while the soul is substance, and not body. Al-Kindī asserts that if man knows his real nature, he knows the realities of his body and soul; if he knows this, then he knows everything. For this reason, the sages (*ḥukamā'*) called man a microcosm (*al-'ālam al-aṣghar*)" (173).
Understandably, all these six definitions of philosophy go back to the Greek sources. Since I am primarily interested in al-Kindī's conception of philosophy as *ḥikmah*, I will spend most of my time on this particular relation, rather than on identifying his sources. For the origins of these definitions see for instance, Frank.

[820] Al-Kindī, *Rasā'il*, 177.

[821] Ibid., 177. In his *Kitāb al-ḥudūd*, al-Kindī does not present a full-fledged treatment of the subject matter of human virtues. His statements are quite brief and incomplete. A more elaborate presentation of this topic can be found in Ibn Miskawayh, *Tahdhīb al-akhlāq* (Beirut, 1978), and especially in Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, *Akhlāq-i Nāṣirī* (Tehran, 1952).

extant philosophical work *fī al-Falsafah al-Ūlā*[822] are quite illustrative in relation to this point.

In al-Kindī's view, philosophy is the greatest and most noble human art (*al-ṣinā'ah al-insāniyyah*), for it seeks to know the true nature of things, insofar as is possible for man.[823]

Al-Kindī's definition of philosophy as a "human art" indicates that by this term he does not refer to prophetic or sacred *ḥikmah*, which is purely God-given and beyond personal intellectual efforts; instead, he means intellectual *ḥikmah* which can be attained through intensive study and contemplation. But, in the final analysis, what al-Kindī expects from philosophy is (prophetic) *ḥikmah*, as he says,

> the aim (*gharaḍ*) of the philosopher is, with respect to his knowledge, to attain the truth (*iṣābat al-ḥaqq*), and with respect to his action, to act truthfully (*al-'amal bi-al-ḥaqq*).[824]

Al-Kindī asserts that knowledge of things is dependent upon the knowledge of their causes, for, as he states, "We do not know the truth we are seeking without finding a cause (*'illah*)."[825] The cause of the existence (*wujūd*) and maintenance (*thabāt*) of everything is the Truth/True One (*al-Ḥaqq*), from which each thing derives its being

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[822] In this work, al-Kindī deals with two main philosophical questions: first, he rejects the idea of the eternity of the world, and second, he argues that God is ineffable. The text has been translated into English with an introduction and commentary; see Alfred Ivry, *Al-Kindī's Metaphysics: a translation of Ya'qūb b. Isḥāq al-Kindī's Treatise "On First Philosophy" (fī al-Falsafah al-ūlā)* (Albany, 1974). I should mention that I have consulted Ivry's renderings throughout my translations from this work.

[823] Al-Kindī, *Rasā'il*, 97.

[824] Ibid., 97.

[825] Ibid., 97.

(*a/inniyyah*) and thus has a truth (*ḥaqīqah*) in its existence. The True One exists necessarily (*iḍṭirāran*), and this existence further originates the existence of beings.[826]

In al-Kindī's view, the ultimate goal of philosophy is to attain true knowledge of God. He states that the noblest part of philosophy and the highest in rank is "the first/primordial philosophy (*al-falsafah al-'ūlā*)", namely, knowledge of the First Truth (*'ilm al-ḥaqq al-awwal*), Which is the cause of all truth. Therefore, according to al-Kindī's argument, only the one who fully understands (*muḥīṭ*) this most noble knowledge deserves to be called the perfect and most noble philosopher in the proper sense of the word. Al-Kindī bases this conclusion on the principle that the knowledge of the cause (*'illah*) is more noble than knowledge of the effect (*ma'lūl*), for one could have complete knowledge of every object of knowledge (*ma'lūmāt*) only when one could obtain full knowledge of its causes.[827] In this regard, al-Kindī makes use of the four Aristotelian causes (material, formal, efficient and final) in order to demonstrate philosophically the existence of God. He describes knowledge of the first cause (*'ilm al-'illah al-ūlā*) as "first philosophy", since it contains the knowledge of all the rest of philosophy.[828]

Al-Kindī's conception of philosophy as *ḥikmah* – encouraged by religion to be sought everywhere by any decent means possible – is evident also in his depiction of the history of philosophy. He pictures this history as a cooperative and cumulative tradition; he further sees it as a progressive process of intellectualizing eternal truth, which is *ḥikmah*. Without undervaluing their attempts, he gratefully acknowledges the efforts of

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[826] Ibid., 97. Al-Kindī use of the term *al-ḥaqq* might owe its origin both/either to the Qur'anic description of God (20:114; 18:44) and/or to the Neoplatonic description of God as "The One". For Ivry's note on this point see, Ivry, 120.

[827] Al-Kindī, *Rasā'il*, 98-101.

[828] Ibid., 101.

all previous philosophers to attain truth, regardless of their being small or great, sufficient or deficient in reaching truth, and regardless of the ethnicity of the thinker. Al-Kindī holds each of those attempts as a contribution to the intellectual advancement of mankind and as an instrument leading to further knowledge of the real nature of things. At the same time, he does not see himself as a passive recipient of the philosophers of the past; rather, he puts himself in charge of improving their intellectual legacy through completing their statements and perfecting their methods. He is aware of the difficulty of obtaining all the truths by a single individual and during a single lifetime, and thus acknowledges the necessity of the cumulative and joint effort of mankind in philosophy, which is as much cumulative as it is corrective.[829] It is within this framework that al-Kindī welcomes Aristotle's thought and describes the latter as "the most distinguished of the Greeks (*mubarriz al-yūnāniyyīn*) in philosophy."[830]

Al-Kindī's portrayal of Aristotle and the primary objectives of his philosophy are quite noteworthy. Al-Kindī's reception of the Aristotelian system is clearly exemplified in his writings on the purpose of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. According to al-Kindī's discussions in his work *fī Kammiyat kutub Arisṭūṭālīs* – in which he deals with the number and contents of the Aristotelian corpus – the purpose of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* is an exposition of immaterial things, of the unity of God (*tawḥīd Allāh*), and of His Most Beautiful Names (*asmā'uhu al-ḥusnā*); the *Metaphysics* also explains, al-Kindī continues,

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[829] Ibid., 102. In his introduction to *fī al-Falsafah al-Ūlā*, Abū Rīdah states that such an approach of welcoming and appreciating the truth regardless of its origin was a part of the spirit of Arabic and Islamic culture for a long time before al-Kindī. Well-known statements, like the following ones, had already paved the way for this approach: "*Ḥikmah* is the stray camel of the believer;" "Take *ḥikmah*, as whatever its origin would be, it does not harm you;" and "Do not [try to] know the truth by people, [instead] know the truth itself, then you will know its possessors." Al-Kindī, *Rasā'il*, 83.

[830] Ibid., 103.

that God is the complete agent cause of the universe and its absolute sustainer through His perfect organization (*tadbīrihi al-mutqin*) and complete wisdom (*ḥikmatihi al-tāmmah*).[831] In the Kindīan context, then, metaphysics is basically identified with theology, and, apparently, as I will examine in the following pages, it was later al-Fārābī's misson to correct such an assumption with regard to the purpose of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. This fact might have been a result of the poorer scholarly quality, as well as the limited number, of Aristotelian works that reached al-Kindī, as opposed to later philosophers.

Al-Kindī reports that Aristotle himself also sincerely appreciated the contribution of previous thinkers in attaining truth. Apparently following this tradition, al-Kindī expresses his fundamental principle in this regard, which makes him a faithful lover of truth or *ḥikmah* in Islamic philosophical literature:

> We must not be ashamed of appreciating the truth and of acquiring it wherever it comes from, even if it comes from races remote (*al-ajnās al-qāsiyah*) and nations different from (*al-umam al-mubāyanah*) us. For the seeker of truth, nothing is dearer than the truth itself, and there must not be any disparagement of the truth, nor belittling either of one who speaks it or of one who conveys it. No one is [ever] diminished by the truth; on the contrary, everything is ennobled by the truth itself.[832]

Al-Kindī thus considers philosophy as a cumulative intellectual progression of mankind, which has an unbroken chain of representatives among every human generation throughout history. Through his efforts to improve the philosophical formulations of the past, he envisages himself as a part of this distinguished community in his own lifetime.

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[831] Ibid., 384. We do not know the exact scholarly quality of the copy of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* that was within al-Kindī's reach. But we do know that he had the work in Arabic, for Ibn al-Nadīm reports that Usṭāth (Eustathius) translated the *Metaphysics* into Arabic for al-Kindī himself. Ibn al-Nadīm, 367. For al-Kindī's intellectual activities with respect to the newly translated Greek works see also, Matti Moosa, "Al-Kindī's role in the transmission of Greek knowledge to the Arabs," *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society* 15 (1967): 1-18.

[832] Al-Kindī, *Rasā'il*, 103.

He is critical of those who underestimate philosophical inquiry to attain truth. Without naming them, he calls the opponents of philosophy "strangers to the truth (*ahl al-ghurbah 'an al-ḥaqq*)" and questions their position, asserting that they are motivated by certain this-wordly considerations, such as attempting to gain a religious leadership within their community.[833] Al-Kindī does not consider them true believers because what they call "unbelief (*kufr*)" is in fact "the knowledge of the true nature of things."[834] This knowledge includes the knowledge of divinity (*'ilm al-rubūbiyyah*), of unity (*waḥdāniyyah*) and of virtue (*faḍīlah*). It further comprises knowledge of everything useful (*nāfi'*) and of the way to it, while at the same time protecting its possessor against anything harmful (*ḍārr*).[835] Al-Kindī asserts that the adversaries of the philosophical method lack the eligibility to evaluate the necessity of philosophy, for they do not know the reality of philosophical knowledge. He challenges their claims with a counter-

[833] Ibid., 103-104. Since al-Kindī does not name the addressees of his statements, modern scholars have different opininons regarding his actual target. Ivry argues that they are the Mu'tazilite theologians, for he finds internal clues in the passage leading to this conclusion; for instance, al-Kindī mentions their use of "speculation (*naẓār*)" and accuses them of "trafficking in religion (*al-tijārah bi-al-dīn*)" in order to gain positions of prestige and power. Ivry states that these are characteristics of the Mu'tazilite theology and their political stance during the *Miḥnah* (Inquisition), repectively. In this regard, he disagrees with Walzer and Abū Rīdah who portray al-Kindī as a member of the Mu'tazilah. For Ivry's argument, see his introductory notes in his translation of al-Kindī's *fī al-Falsafah al-ūlā*, Ivry, 22-34. For Walzer's description of al-Kindī as a thinker affiliated to the Mu'tazilah, see Walzer, "New Studies on Al-Kindī," *Oriens* 10 (1957): 203-232, and "The Rise of Islamic Philosophy," *Oriens* 3 (1950): 9. For a similar portrayal of al-Kindī see Abū Rīdah's introduction to his edition of al-Kindī's treatises, Al-Kindī, *Rasā'il*, 28-31. On the other hand, Adamson, in his recent study on al-Kindī, disagrees with Ivry and argues that the theologians whom al-Kindī attacks must be the traditionalists like Ibn Ḥanbal and his supporters. In Adamson's view, it is not logical to group the diverse competing trends within *kalām* during the middle of the nineth century under a single Mu'tazilite heading. For Adamson's argument see, Peter Adamson, *al-Kindī* (Oxford, 2007): 22-25. As far as my personal opinion is concerned, I find Adamson's conclusion problematic as well, for he identifies al-Kindī's opponents as the "traditionalists" like Ibn Ḥanbal and his followers, but without any substantial internal or external proof found in al-Kindī's statements. Adamson's argument is, after all, subject to the same criticism as he himself directs to that of Ivry. I am, therefore, more inclined to Ivry's position instead, because, considering the historical background of the period in which al-Kindī lived, Ivry's argument appears to be better grounded in the historical context of al-Kindī's lifetime and thus, at least in this respect, makes more sense.

[834] Al-Kindī, *Rasā'il*, 104.

[835] Ibid., 104.

argument (of Aritotle's) saying that they ought to know philosophy sufficiently in order to be able to refute the necessity of knowing it.[836]

According to al-Kindī's statements, the authentic prophetic message is totally compatible with true philosophy, for the essence of what the true messengers brought from God teaches the affirmation (*iqrār*) of the divinity of God alone and adherence to virtues, which are praiseworthy in His presence, while, at the same time, it necessitates the relinquishment of vices of any kind.[837] Therefore, al-Kindī believes that both religion and philosophy teach the same fundamental metaphysical and ethical principles. Throughout his personal philosophical inquiry, al-Kindī invokes divine assistance in his efforts to establish satisfactorily proofs of the existence and unity of God. He puts himself in charge of this crucial mission so that he could be among those whose intentions God likes and whose actions He accepts.[838]

I have previously mentioned that the term *ḥikmah* is used for two major kinds of knowledge, prophetic or sacred on the one hand, and philosophical or intellectual on the other. In his *fī Kammiyat kutub Arisṭūṭālīs* al-Kindī explains his understanding of prophethood and prophetic knowledge as opposed to philosophical knowledge: the former occurs through revelation, the latter through philosophical pursuit. He regards the human sciences (*al-'ulūm al-insāniyyah*) to be of a lower rank (*martabah*) than divine knowledge (*al-'ilm al-ilāhī*), because the acquisition of the latter does not necessitate personal study, effort, logical inquiry, nor time. Such knowledge is peculiar to the

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[836] Ibid., 105.

[837] Ibid., 104.

[838] Ibid., 105.

prophets to the exclusion of the rest of humankind. It comes to the prophets instantly and effortlessly, and this fact indicates that it comes from God. The prophets receive this knowledge through the will of God by their soul's being purified and illuminated for the truth.[839]

As far as the essences or true natures of these two kinds of knowledge are concerned, al-Kindī does not compare them clearly. His designation of philosophical knowledge as "human" might speculatively be taken in the sense that the prophets have access to a further or different knowledge than philosophical knowledge, but al-Kindī does not say this explicitly.[840] One might also argue that al-Kindī does not compare their essences, but rather the ways prophets and philosophers receive their respective knowledges, and that such a comparison would be out of the scope of his discussion of the topic. An argument might follow that revelation and philosophy should not be taken to be in opposition, but rather that the two are to be considered as two forms or degrees of knowledge working together in a perfect harmony.

One might still argue that depending on the subject matter in question, al-Kindī could voice a preference between, or combine arguments derived from, revelation and philosophy, since we know that he does not draw a clear-cut distinction between theology and metaphysics. Such an approach can be exemplified by al-Kindī's discussions in relation to a passage from the Qur'an (36:79-82).[841] The passage challenges the

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[839] Ibid., 372-373.

[840] In this regard, Adamson asserts that in al-Kindī's view, prophets have access to precisely the same truths as do philosophers, though the former receive their knowledge instantly and effortlessly. Adamson, 43.

[841] "Say that He will give them life who originated them the first time; He knows all creation; He Who has made fire for you out of the green tree, so that you might kindle flame from it. Is not He, Who created the heavens and earth, able to create the like of them? Yes indeed, He is the All-creating, the All-knowing. His command, when he wills a thing, is to say to it, 'Be,' and it is."

unbelievers' argument against Muḥammad in which they were denying the Ressurrection, saying, "Who will give life the bones when they are decayed?" (36:78). Al-Kindī admires the Qur'anic answer saying that creating a thing from nothing is much harder than creating a thing from another thing. In his view, no one can come up with a clearer and briefer proof, and at this point he clearly favors revelation over philosophical knowledge,[842] but, at the same time, he introduces a lengthy philosophical argument in relation to the meaning of the verse. He reminds his reader that everything that comes to be is generated from something other than itself, as God made fire from what is not fire, and heat from what is not heat. God can therefore create through intermediaries or without them; He may make use of material substrata (resurrecting the decayed bones) or perform His deed without them (creating bones for the first time). Since human beings are accustomed to seeing generation with pre-existing matter, the Qur'an brings the act of Divine creation close to their understanding; otherwise, God creates originally from nothing. Thus, in the example of this verse, al-Kindī expresses his admiration for the Qur'anic argumentation and seems to integrate philosophy into the service of explicating Qur'anic passages.[843]

Since al-Kindī identifies metaphysics with theology and treats it as *ḥikmah* leading to the true knowledge of God and His existence, I would now like to examine briefly al-Kindī's philosophical method for establishing the existence of God. He bases his argument step-by-step on a progressive intellection. He states that there are two kinds of human perceptions (*wujūdān*): sensory (*ḥissī*) and intellectual (*'aqlī*). The first kind,

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[842] Al-Kindī, *Rasā'il*, 377.

[843] Ibid., 373-376. See also Adamson, 44-45.

in addition to the human being, is common to all animals, but it is also unstable because of the motion and fluctuation of the object (of perception), and because of the physical and emotional condition of the perceiver. The second kind of perception – intellectual – is peculiar to the human being and superior to sensual perception, for unlike the first, which is directed to "particular (*juz'ī*)" things, the second one produces the knowledge of "universal (*kullī*)" things. Intellectual perception is a faculty of the human soul that produces stable, necessary, and direct knowledge. [844] Al-Kindī's conception of intellect (*'aql*) is as a simple substance (*jawhar basīṭ*) that perceives things in their realities (*mudrik li-al-ashyā' bi-ḥaqā'iqihā*).[845] Therefore, he argues that the knowledge of metaphysics in general and of God in particular should be sought by way of intellectual, as opposed to sensual, perception.

Another noteworthy point in al-Kindī's attempts to establish philosophical proofs for the necessity of the existence of God is his emphasis on the need to use the appropriate method in investigating a particular subject. He argues that it is not reasonable to seek an apodictical perception (*al-wujūd al-burhānī*) in the apprehension of every pursuit. For not every intellectual pursuit is found through demonstration, since not everything has a demonstration; demonstration is found only in some things. Furthermore, a demonstration itself does not have another demonstration, for this would lead to an infinite regress, in which case, there would never be perception of anything at all. Knowledge rests ultimately upon the principles of knowable things and, therefore, if something does not end in knowledge of its principles (*awā'il*), it is not knowable

[844] Al-Kindī, *Rasā'il*, 106-108.

[845] Ibid., 165.

(*ma'lūm*) and there would be no knowledge at all.[846] We need, then, self-evident primary principles upon which we can base our propositions.

Likewise, al-Kindī asserts, one should not seek probable arguments (*iqnā'āt*) in the mathematical sciences, but rather, demonstrative ones. If one were to use probability in mathematics, his comprehension of it would be conjectural (*ẓannī*) and not scientific (*'ilmī*). Physics, on the other hand, is the science of everything which moves, while the knowledge of what is beyond physical objects is knowledge of what does not move. As a result of these peculiar characteristics of each intellectual pursuit, al-Kindī states that every distinctive inquiry has a particular perception different from the perception of another: some disciplines proceed in accord with a pursuit of probability (*iqnā'*), some in accord with a pursuit of parables (*amthāl*), some in accord with historical witness (*shahādāt al-akhbār*), some in accord with sensation (*ḥiss*), and some in accord with demonstration (*burhān*). In al-Kindī's view, the lack of such a subtle methodological approach is the origin of the mistakes made by many seekers of knowledge. Applying the wrong method to the wrong subject will result in nothing but confusion. One should not pursue probability in the science of mathematics, nor sensation or exemplification (*tamthīl*) in the science of the metaphysical/divine (*ilāhī*), nor conceptual generalization or syllogism (*al-jawāmi' al-fikriyyah*) in the science of the physical, nor demonstration either in rhetoric (*balāghah*) or in the principles of demonstration.[847]

Al-Kindī's conception of God (literally, the True One) is totally other-worldly; or, to put it another way, our conventional knowledge of things in this world is not

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[846] Ibid., 111-112.

[847] Ibid., 111-112.

applicable to Him, since He transcends all descriptions; or, to put it still another way, we cannot make any positive statements concerning God. He describes God in terms of what He is not, and thus only with negative attributes, that is to say, the True One is not motion (*ḥarakah*),[848] nor soul (*nafs*),[849] nor intellect (*'aql*);[850] the True One is not identifiable by synonymous names (*asmā' mutarādifah*)[851] nor by way of homonomy (*ishtibāh al-ism*);[852] the True One is never spoken of by way of matter (*'unṣur*).[853]

Al-Kindī's proof to establish the existence of God premises the absolute difference between God and every other kind of thing. God is the Eternal Whose non-existence is inconceivable; there is no "before" to His existence, nor a cause for it, nor a reason (*sabab*) for the sake of which His existence is. In sum, His existence is outside all mental categories, i.e., subject, predicate, genus, species, body, form, time, space, and the like. The Eternal does not perish (*lā yufsid*) nor move because perishing and motion occur in changing things, He is perfect necessarily,[854] and He is pure and simple unity.[855]

Al-Kindī clearly rejects the idea of an eternal universe, as he argues that the universe is created from nothing, and that it is temporal rather than eternal. It seems that

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[848] Ibid., 154.

[849] Ibid., 154.

[850] Ibid., 155. Unlike his successors al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā, al-Kindī does not articulate a complete scheme of hierarchically emanated intelligences, and thus he does not explain clearly his understanding of the relation between personal and universal intelligences and God. Even though he uses the expression "the emanation of unity from the True One, the First (*fayḍ al-waḥdah 'an al-wāḥid al-ḥaqq al-awwal*)" (Al-Kindī, *Rasā'il*, 162), he does not elaborate this issue.

[851] Al-Kindī, *Rasā'il*, 155.

[852] Ibid., 156.

[853] Ibid., 156.

[854] Ibid., 113-114.

[855] Ibid., 160.

he does not know the real Aristotelian and Peripatetic position in this regard. This situation could be a result of the limited number and poor translation quality of the Aristotelian texts available to him. We should also remember the Neoplatonic interpretations of Aristotelian thought, especially in the Alexandrian school. Throughout his writings, al-Kindī subsitutes Aristotle's conception of God as the Unmovable Mover with the Creator God of Islamic religion. He believes that God is an efficient cause of the universe, not just a final cause. This significant departure from Aristotle's conception of God might owe its origin to Neoplatonic interpretations and criticisms of Aristotle on this topic. Al-Kindī says that creation (*ibdā'*) means "making a thing appear from nothing (*iẓhār al-shay' 'an lays*)"[856] and that the First Cause refers to the creator (*mubdi'*), the unmoved (*ghayr mutaḥarrik*) agent (*fā'il*), perfecter of all (*mutammim al-kull*).[857] The true, first act, thus, is the "bringing beings to be from non-being *(ta'yīs al-aysāt 'an laysa)*."[858] Al-Kindī states that this act is peculiar to God alone, as He is the end of every cause (*ghāyat kull 'illah*). According to al-Kindī's statement, therefore, the term "origination (*ibdā'*)" refers to this act of bringing beings to be from non-being.[859] And in this regard, al-Kindī's conception of divine causality in its relation to the world is not open to the criticism formulated by al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) against the philosophy of al-Fārābī and his successors.

Al-Kindī's First Cause is simultaneously "the eternal (*al-azalī*), which has never been non-being (*lam yakun laysa*), and which needs nothing else for its subsistence (*laysa*

[856] Ibid., 165.

[857] Ibid., 165.

[858] Ibid., 182.

[859] Ibid., 183.

bi-muḥtājin fī qiwāmihi ilā ghayrihi). That which needs nothing else for its subsistence has no cause (*lā 'illata lahu*); and that which had no cause lasts forever (*dā'imun abadan*)."[860] Al-Kindī argues that body, motion and time occur simultaneously in being. The body of the universe is not prior to time. He rejects the idea that the body of the universe was at rest originally – though it had the possibility of motion – and then subsequently moved. Since there is no time other than through motion, and since there is no body unless there is motion and no motion unless there is a body, none of the three is prior to any of the others. It follows that it is impossible for time, body and motion to have infinity in actuality. Al-Kindī thus concludes that the body of the universe is necessarily finite and that it is impossible for it to be eternal.[861]

Furthermore, al-Kindī rejects the idea of auto-causation. He states that it is not possible for a thing to be the cause of the generation of its essence (*'illatu kawni dhāthī*).[862] According to al-Kindī's understanding, all things have a first cause (*illah 'ūlā*), which is not included in their genus (*ghayr mujānasah*), and has no resemblance (*lā mushākalah*) nor likeness (*lā mushābahah*) nor association (*lā mushārakah*) with them. It is, rather, superior (*a'lā*), more noble (*ashraf*) and prior (*aqdam*) to them, being the cause of their generation and maintenance (*sababu kawnihā wa-thabātihā*).[863] Thus, in al-Kindī's view, everything owes the origin of its existence to God and the existence of everything is dependent on His existence; but unlike His eternal and infinite existence, everything has a being created and finite in time.

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[860] Ibid., 169.

[861] Ibid., 118-120.

[862] Ibid., 123.

[863] Ibid., 143.

Al-Kindī's argument follows that this first cause must be either single (*wāḥid*) or multiple (*kathīr*): if it were multiple, then it would contain unity (*waḥdah*), since multiplicity (*kathrah*) is nothing other than a collection of units (*jimā' awḥād*), and it would then be multiplicity and unity together. In such a case, the cause of multiplicity and unity would be unity and multiplicity, and a thing would be the cause of itself. Al-Kindī underlines the basic logical principle that a cause is other than its effect (*ma'lūl*), and this leads him to the conclusion that the first cause (*'illah ūlā*) is neither multiple nor multiple and single, but rather, it is one.[864] Every multiplicity comes into being through unity and there would never be multiplicity if there were not first unity.[865] In the final analysis, al-Kindī conceptualizes God as the True One, the First, Who is the Creator (*mubdi'*) and Sustainer (*mumsik*) of everything.[866]

When it comes to explaining the relation between God and the universe, al-Kindī asserts that the relation of the Creator (*al-bāri'*) to this world resembles the relation of the soul to the body. It is not possible for the soul to be recognized (*yu'lam*) except through the body, in which the effects (*āthār*) of the soul's management (*tadbīr*) of the body can be seen. Likewise, al-Kindī says, the visible world (*al-'ālam al-mar'ī*) is to the Creator: It is not possible for the invisible (*lā yurā*) world to be known except through the management found (*yūjad*) in this world and the effects which indicate it (*al-dāllah 'alayhi*).[867]

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[864] Ibid., 143.

[865] Ibid., 161-162.

[866] Ibid., 162.

[867] Ibid., 174.

What al-Kindī seems to be doing with all these and other arguments is to attempt to explain religious notions in accordance with philosophical pursuits. In this regard, he is a stage-setter for Greek philosophy in the Islamic world, or as Ibn al-Nadīm expresses it, he is "the Philosopher of the Arabs (*faylasūf al-'arab*)," meaning that he is the earliest philosophical authoritiy in philosophical studies in the Muslim lands whose ethnic origin is purely Arab.[868] He was among the earliest and most authoritative figures to develop a vocabulary for philosophical thought in Arabic on the basis of the newly translated Greek philosophical works. Not only did he contribute immensely to integrating Greek philosophy into an Arabic-speaking culture, but he also "Islamicized" many philosophical ideas.[869] It is true that his method is open to questions with respect to its being purely philosophical or not, as can be seen in his conception of metaphysics. I have already noted that he does not draw a definitive line between metaphysics and theology, but this does not devalue his great service in philosophizing and systematizing Islamic religious and intellectual principles, however "incomplete" his philosophical system might be, and however "foreign" the origin of his philosophical ideas might be.

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[868] Ibn al-Nadīm, 371. In addition to al-Kindī's philosophical works, Ibn al-Nadīm lists his wide-ranging scholarly works covering the whole spectrum of knowledge in his time, including mathematics, music, astronomy, medicine, psychology, and politics. Ibn al-Nadīm, 372-379.

[869] This point can be illustrated by al-Kindī's use of philosophy to explain Qur'anic expressions. For instance, in his treatise *fī Ibānah 'an sujūd al-jirm al-aqṣā*, he deals with the idea of the prostration of the outermost sphere and its obedience to God. This work is in fact an interpretation of the Qur'anic verse 55: 6, reading, "And the stars and the trees prostrate themselves (*yasjudān*)." Before going into detailed philosophical explanation regarding body, motion, etc., al-Kindī talks about the linguistic aspect of the topic. He argues that when one attempts to interpret a Qur'anic expression, one should first pay attention to its linguistic peculiarities in the Arabic language. In his view, literal meaning should not be ignored, but should not be blindly insisted upon as the unique explanation either. In the example of the word "*sujūd* (prostration)", al-Kindī states that it literally means the physical act of prostration in Islamic prayer. When it comes to the stars, this literal meaning does not make much sense, as they physically cannot prostrate themselves; so, al-Kindī asserts, we should take the word "*sujūd*" in this verse in the sense of "obedience". He further exemplifies this meaning by attestations from Arabic poetry. Al-Kindī, *Rasā'il*, 244-246.

Al-Kindī does not seem to be bothered with using the Greek heritage, as he acknowledges and appreciates it as a great contribution to the cooperative and cumulative intellectual progression of mankind. In other words, he sees philosophy as *ḥikmah* and thus makes use of it in his expositions of religious and philosophical subject matters, including the existence of God and creation. To this end, he repeatedly tries to show that the pursuit of philosophy is compatible with the teachings of Islam. In order to facilitate its reception within the Muslim culture, al-Kindī argues that philosophy is the knowledge of the true natures of things, especially of Divinity, which brings philosophy into harmony with the essence of the prophetic messages. In his view, considering its indispensible religious service, not only is philosophical inquiry "permissible", but it is moreover "ordained": after all, it can contribute to knowledge of the main tenets of Islam. In this regard, one might describe al-Kindī's efforts as a kind of philosophy of *tawḥīd*, and one could find historical support for such a description in the writings on the history of Islamic philosophy, since his major work *fī al-Falsafah al-Ūlā* was also known under the title *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*,[870] though we do not know for sure whether or not al-Kindī himself gave this title to his work. In the final analysis, in al-Kindī's view, philosophy is the knowledge of truth together with putting it into practice, which is nothing other than the traditional conception of *ḥikmah* found in the Muslim scholarly circles that I have been discussing throughout this dissertation.[871]

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[870] See, for instance, al-Andalūsī, 52.

[871] Similarly, Endress asserts that al-Kindī's efforts to legitimize philosophy rely on *ḥikmah*, which was a long-lasting and universal concept in circulation among the Arabs through its pre-Islamic and Qur'anic components. Endress, "The Circle of al-Kindī: Early Arabic Translations from the Greek and the Rise of Islamic Philosophy," *The Ancient Tradition in Christian and Islamic Hellenism*, 65.

IV. Al-Fārābī (d. 339/950): *ḥikmah* in the view of "The Second Master"

Al-Fārābī uses the words "philosophy" and "*ḥikmah*" interchangeably. In his *Taḥṣīl al-sa'ādah*, al-Fārābī gives an historical outline of his reception of philosophy as *ḥikmah*.[872] He reports an account relating that philosophy (literally, theoretical virtue [*al-faḍīlah al-naẓariyyah*]) existed in ancient times among the Chaldeans living in present-day Iraq. He does not specify any personal name or religious group as the originator of this science. One might argue that al-Fārābī is referring to the prophetic tradition started with Abraham who is said to have lived in that region, or that by this statement al-Fārābī has Hermes (The Third) in mind, since this Hermes is reported to have lived in the same region and revived many sciences. Without going into such historical details, however, al-Fārābī simply states that from the Chaldeans philosophy reached the people of Egypt, and then the Greeks; it remained in Greece until it was transmitted to the Syrians, and then to the Arabs. Accordingly, the linguistic means of this science were Greek, Syriac, and Arabic, in succession. Al-Fārābī informs us that the Greeks who possessed this

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[872] Al-Fārābī uses the term "the theoretical virtue (*al-faḍīlah al-naẓariyyah*)" to refer apparently to philosophy in general, and to metaphysics and logic in particular. According to his statements, the science of theoretical virtue relies on demonstrative methods, and in this regard, it is the foremost among the following four major intellectual sciences: first, the theoretical virtue through which beings become intelligible with certain demonstrations (*bi-barāhīn yaqīniyyah*); second, the science in which the same intelligibles become acquired by persuasive methods (*turuq iqnā'iyyah*); third, the science that comprises the similitudes (*mithālāt*) of these intelligibles which, again, become accepted by persuasive methods; fourth, the sciences derived (*muntaza'ah*) from these three for each and every nation. Al-Fārābī, *Taḥṣīl al-sa'ādah* (Hyderabad, 1926): 35. *Taḥṣīl al-sa'ādah* has been translated into English by Muhsin Mahdi. Throughout my discussions, I have used the Arabic primary text, but I have consulted Mahdi's translation wherever I felt a need. Muhsin Mahdi, "The Attainment of Happiness" *Alfarabi's Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle* (Ithaca, 1969): 13-50.
Al-Fārābī describes theoretical virtue as the superior science to which the rest of the authoritative sciences (namely, the second, third, and fourth sciences) are subordinate: these sciences merely follow the example of the science of theoretical virtue and are employed to accomplish its purpose, which is supreme happiness (*al-sa'ādah al-quṣwā*) and the final perfection (*al-kamāl al-akhīr*) to be achieved by man. Al-Fārābī, *Taḥṣīl al-sa'ādah*, 38.

science used to call it "unqualified/absolute wisdom (*al-ḥikmah 'alā al-iṭlāq*) and the highest wisdom (*al-ḥikmah al-'uẓmā*)."[873]

The Greeks, al-Fārābī continues, called the acquisition of this *ḥikmah* "science (*'ilm*)", and the scientific state of mind "philosophy (*falsafah*)", by which they meant "the predilection and the love for the highest wisdom (*īthār al-ḥikmah al-'uẓmā wa-*

[873] Ibid., 38. In addition to the above-mentioned information concerning the history of philosophy in the lands of the various nations in the Near East, al-Fārābī reports the history of philosophy specifically in the land of the Greeks and its transmission to his own time. In this regard, he presents an unbroken historical chain of philosophical instruction. In his treatise on the rise of philosophy (*fī Ẓuhūr al-falsafah*) – unfortunately it is lost in its complete form but recorded partly by Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah – al-Fārābī tells this story. He describes himself as an heir to the Aristotelian philosophy through Alexandrian and then Ḥarrānian schools. Al-Fārābī states that philosophy became widespread during the reign of the [Ptolemaic] Greek kings. After the death of Aristotle, it flourished and continued unchanged in Alexandria until the last days of the Woman (i.e., Cleopatra), who was defeated by Augustus, the Roman emperor. Augustus ordered that the Aristotelian corpus, together with the expositions written by his pupils, be copied and taught. He ordered that multiple copies be made, one of which he took with him to Rome and others he left in Alexandria. At the same time, he took Andronicus, a competent teacher of Aristotelian philosophy, with him to Rome. Thus, the centers of learning became two and continued so until the appearance of Christianity. Then, the teaching came to an end in Rome, but continued in Alexandria until the king of the Christians looked into the matter. The bishops got together and discussed which parts of Aristotle's works were to be taught and which were to be dropped. Their main criterion was religiously oriented, for they dropped the parts that they thought to be in contradiction with Christianity, while they allowed the teaching of the parts that could be used in support of their religion. Accordingly, they decided that the logical works (*Organon*) were to be taught up to the end of the "existential figures (*al-ashkāl al-wujūdiyyah*)," (i.e., up to *Prior Analytics*, I, 7), but not beyond that. To this extent, philosophical instruction remained unchanged, while the rest was kept hidden until the coming of Islam. In the meantime, according to al-Fārābī's narration, the teaching was transferred from Alexandria to Antioch, where it lasted for a long time, until only a single teacher was left. Fortunately, this teacher passed his knowledge on to two men, one from Ḥarrān, the other from Marw. These two men left their teacher, taking the books with them. Al-Fārābī traces his own philosophical education back to them. He reports that the man from Marw had two students, Ibrāhīm al-Marwazī and Yuḥannā b. Ḥaylān. The Ḥarranian, likewise, taught two students, Isrā'īl the Bishop and Quwayrī. Ibrāhīm and Quwayrī moved to Baghdad, the former engaging in religious subject matters, while the latter took up philosophical teaching. As for Yuḥannā, he too engaged in religious activity in his own religion; at the same time, it was he from whom al-Fārābī received his own learning in logic. Mattā b. Yūnus, a contemporary of al-Fārābī, in turn received instruction from al-Marwazī. Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah, 604-605.
As far as al-Fārābī's conception of Plato and Aristotle is concerned, he describes them as two sages (*ḥakīmān*) who are the fountainheads (*mubdi'ān*) of philosophy and the originators (*munshi'ān*) of systematic philosophy, with its primary and secondary subject matters. Al-Fārābī also cites their definition of philosophy as "knowledge of existing things insofar as they are existent (*al-'ilm bi-al-mawjūdāt bi-mā hiya mawjūdah*)." Al-Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Jam' bayn ra'yay al-Hakīmayn*, ed. Albīr N. Nādir (Beirut, 1960): 80.

maḥabbatuhā)."[874] They called the one who acquires it "philosopher", meaning the one who loves and has predilection for the highest wisdom. As al-Fārābī's states,

> they (the Greeks) held that it potentially subsumes all the virtues; they called it the "science of sciences (*'ilm al-'ulūm*)", the "mother of sciences (*umm al-'ulūm*)", the "wisdom of wisdoms (*ḥikmat al-ḥikam*)" and the "art of arts (*ṣinā'at al-ṣinā'āt*)"; they meant the art that comprises all the arts, the virtue that comprises all the virtues, and the wisdom that comprises all the wisdoms.[875]

Al-Fārābī states that *ḥikmah* may be used for proficiency and extreme competence in any art whatsoever when it leads to performing accomplishments of which most practitioners of that art are incapable. In such a case, it is called "human wisdom (*ḥikmah bashariyyah*)". Thus he who is extremely competent in an art is called "wise (*ḥakīm*)" in that art. Similarly, a man with penetrating practical judgment (*al-nāfidh al-ru'yah*) and sharpness (*ḥathīth*) may be called "wise" in the thing regarding which he has penetrating practical judgment. However, al-Fārābī concludes, unqualified/absolute wisdom (*al-ḥikmah 'alā al-iṭlāq*) is the abovementioned science and state of mind alone.[876]

The traditional Islamic conception of *ḥikmah* as a combination of knowledge and action echoes in al-Fārābī's philosophical writings. This is the case especially in his political philosophy. In this regard, one might summarize al-Fārābī's political writings – however Greek their origins might be – as formulations for the practice of *ḥikmah* within a living community. He argues that true philosophy combines theoretical virtues with practical ones. Otherwise, he describes the knowledge of the theoretical sciences lacking the faculty for exploiting them for the benefit of others as "defective philosophy (*falsafah nāqiṣah*)". Accordingly, al-Fārābī states, a truly perfect philosopher has to possess both

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[874] Al-Fārābī, *Taḥṣīl al-sa'ādah*, 38-39.

[875] Ibid., 39.

[876] Ibid., 39.

the theoretical sciences and the faculty for exploiting them for the benefit of others in accordance with their capacity; he should address these people by employing appropriate demonstrative, persuasive methods, as well as methods that represent things through images. In political context, therefore, the mission of the true philosopher is no other than that of the supreme ruler (*al-ra'īs al-awwal*).[877]

What appears again from his writings in *Taḥṣīl al-sa'ādah* and in his other works is the fact that al-Fārābī uses the words "*ḥikmah*" and "*falsafah*" interchangeably. In a more restricted connotation, he uses *ḥikmah* in the sense of metaphysics. He then defines *ḥikmah* as "knowledge of the remote causes (*'ilm al-asbāb al-ba'īdah*) by which exist all the rest of the existents and the proximate causes (*al-asbāb al-qarībah*) of the things which are caused (*dhawāt al-asbāb*)."[878] According to his statements, *ḥikmah* comprises the knowledge of the real nature of things, including the knowledge of the reality of their existence with respect to their essences, qualities, and quantities. *Ḥikmah* also comprises the knowledge of the hierarchical and causal relationship between the One Existence (*wujūd wāḥid*) and the remote, as well as proximate, causes. *Ḥikmah* further deals with the knowledge that the One is the First in truth (*al-awwal fī al-ḥaqīqah*), that the continuity of its existence is not due to the existence of anything else, and that it is

[877] Ibid., 39-40. In a more logical connotation, al-Fārābī lays the same categorical principles of employing different kinds of reasoning in accordance with the situation and capacity of the audience: 1) Demonstrative reasoning leads to certainty, but is appropriate for only philosophers and scholars. 2) Dialectical reasoning leads to a semblance of certainty through good intention, and is to be employed by theologians. 3) Sophistical reasoning leads to a semblance of certainty through bad intentions. 4) Rhetorical reasoning leads to a probable opinion, and is used by politicians. 5) Poetical reasoning leads to imagery causing pleasure or pain in the soul. Al-Fārābī, *Iḥṣā' al-'ulūm*, ed. 'Uthmān Amīn (Cairo, 1949): 64-69. In al-Fārābī's view, making use of the appropriate kind of reasoning in accordance with the intellectual level of the addressee is, therefore, a crucial part of philosophical argumentation, and in this regard, the arts of dialectic, rhetoric, and poetics are integral parts of philosophy, for they represent the efficient means of communication with common people.

[878] Al-Fārābī, *Fuṣūl al-madanī*, ed. and trans. D. M. Dunlop (Cambridge, 1961): 126.

sufficient in itself, not deriving existence from any other thing. *Ḥikmah*, in continuation of the idea of al-Kindī, contains the knowledge that the existence of the One is absolutely different from other things, that it does not share any of the qualities found in the existence of other things, and that it has ultimate perfection.[879] In such a metaphysical context, al-Fārābī's conception of *ḥikmah* refers specifically to the knowledge of the One or First Truth and its relation to other beings. Al-Fārābī expresses this conception in his definition of *ḥikmah* as "the most excellent knowledge (*afḍal al-'ilm*) of the most excellent existents (*li-afḍal al-mawjūdāt*)".[880]

In his exposition on the word *ḥakīm* as an attribution of God, al-Fārābī says, "*ḥikmah* consists in thinking the most excellent thing through the most excellent knowledge."[881] This definition obviously reminds us of the Aristotelian God Whose primary action is "thinking" or "self-contemplation", for al-Fārābī continues his discussion arguing that the Wise intellects/comprehends (*ya'qil*) His essence and, through this knowledge, He knows the most excellent thing. The most excellent knowledge is permanent knowledge, which cannot cease to exist. This is the knowledge of what is permanent and cannot cease to exist, namely His knowledge of His essence.[882] In this context, al-Fārābī ascribes *ḥikmah* in its absolute sense to God alone.

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[879] Ibid., 126-127.

[880] Ibid., 133.

[881] Al-Fārābī, *Kitāb Ārā' ahl al-madīnah al-fāḍilah*, ed. Albīr N. Nādir (Beirut, 1968): 47-48.

[882] Ibid., 47-48. For the same argument see, al-Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Siyāsah al-madaniyyah: al-mulaqqab bi-Mabādi' al-mawjūdāt*, ed. Fawzī M. Najjār (Beirut, 1964): 45-46.

Al-Fārābī asserts that the person who attains true happiness may be called *ḥakīm*, but it is only the necessary existent (God) who possesses *ḥikmah* in the ultimate sense of the word. He elaborates this point saying,

> *Ḥikmah* is the knowledge of the real existence (*ma'rifat al-wujūd al-ḥaqq*) which is a necessary existent by itself (*wājib al-wujūd bi-dhātihi*); the *ḥakīm* is the one who possesses such knowledge perfectly. There is an imperfection (*nuqṣān*) in the existence of everything other than the [necessary] existent by itself. This imperfection occurs in accordance with that thing's (hierarchical) rank with respect to the First and thus the former attains an imperfect perception (*nāqiṣ al-idrāk*). Therefore, there is no [real] *ḥakīm* but the First, for He knows Himself perfectly.[883]

In fact, al-Fārābī argues that in comparison to its usage pertaining to God, *ḥikmah* may be used with respect to man only figuratively. He reports that on the basis of man's faculty of intellection (*ta'aqqul*), some people call those who practice such intellection "*ḥukamā'*". Al-Fārābī finds this designation inappropriate, for *ḥikmah* in his view is the most excellent knowledge of the most excellent of existents, while human intellection merely knows things human, not to mention that man is not the most excellent thing in the world, nor is he the most excellent of existents. Due to such essential imperfections, human intellection cannot truly be called *ḥikmah*, save figuratively (*bi-al-isti'ārah wa-al-tashbīh*).[884]

Furthermore, according to al-Fārābī's writings, *ḥikmah* is the means of true happiness (*sa'ādah*). He bases his argument on three successive premises: first, *ḥikmah*

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[883] Al-Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Ta'līqāt*, in *al-Fārābī: al-a'lām al-falsafiyyah*, ed. Ja'far Āl Yāsīn (Beirut, 1992): 382.

[884] Al-Fārābī, *Fuṣūl al-madanī*, 133. In his treatise *al-Tanbīh 'alā taḥṣīl al-sa'ādah* al-Fārābī explains such a figurative usage in another way. With respect to their objectives (*maqṣūd*), al-Fārābī classifies the arts (*ṣanā'i'*) into two main categories: a category whose objective is attaining "the good/beautiful (*jamīl*)", and the other whose objective is attaining "the useful/beneficial (*nāfi'*)". According to Fārābīan philosophical terminology, it is only the former kind of art that properly deserves to be called philosophy (*falsafah*) and absolute/unqualified human *ḥikmah* (*al-ḥikmah al-insāniyyah 'alā al-iṭlāq*). As for the arts whose objectives are attaining the "useful/beneficial", they are not to be called absolute/unqualified *ḥikmah*, but instead some of them might be called *falsafah* only figuratively (*'alā ṭarīq al-tashbīh*). Al-Fārābī, *Risālat al-Tanbīh 'alā taḥṣīl al-sa'ādah*, ed. Saḥbān Khalīfāt (Amman, 1987): 223.

is the knowledge of the ultimate causes (*al-asbāb al-quṣwā*) of things; second, the ultimate end (*al-ghāyah al-quṣwā*) for the sake of which man exists (*li-ajlihā kuwwina al-insān*) is happiness; and third, the "end (*ghāyah*)" is one of the (four Aristotelian) causes. This argumentative chain brings al-Fārābī to define *ḥikmah* as, "that which acquaints a person with what is true happiness."[885]

In Fārābīan epistemology, *ḥikmah* holds the highest and most perfect kind of knowledge, and the definition of *ḥikmah* as "the most excellent knowledge of the most excellent existents" is related primarily to God. Furthermore, al-Fārābī's treatment of *ḥikmah* goes beyond his epistemology as it has ontological as well as ethical connotations. His theory of attaining true happiness is based on two kinds of intellectual activity, namely *ḥikmah* and intellection (*ta'aqqul*). *Ḥikmah* alone possesses knowledge of the One (*al-wāḥid*), the First (*al-awwal*), from which the rest of the existents derive their virtue and perfection. It also possesses knowledge of the way and quantity of virtue and perfection that each existent derives from the One, the First. Being one among the existents, man derives perfection in the same manner from the One, the First. It follows that *ḥikmah* possesses knowledge of the greatest perfection derived from the First by man, and that is happiness. *Ḥikmah*, therefore, "acquaints a person with true

[885] Al-Fārābī, *Fuṣūl al-madanī*, 133-134. In his *Kitāb Ārā' ahl al-madīnah al-fāḍilah*, al-Fārābī explains *sa'ādah* as a degree of perfection that the human soul can reach in its existence. At this level of its hierarchical perfection, the soul no longer needs any material support, since it has become one of the incorporeal and immaterial things. This is a permanent and highly advanced degree of perfection, for it is only one rank below the rank of the Active Intellect, which is the highest destination for the soul. Al-Fārābī further defines *sa'ādah* as "the good (*khayr*) which is sought for its own sake; it is never sought at all for attaining something else through it; and there is nothing greater beyond it for man to attain." Al-Fārābī, *Kitāb Ārā' ahl al-madīnah al-fāḍilah*, 105-106. In his view, the attainment of happiness is achieved only by way of certain voluntary actions (*af'āl irādiyyah*), some of which are mental (*fikrī*) and others bodily (*badanī*) actions of man. The good actions help in attaining *sa'ādah* and lead to virtues (*faḍā'il*), while the evil actions becomes an obstacle to *sa'ādah* and lead to vices (*radhā'il*). Ibid., 106.

happiness."[886] As for *ta'aqqul*, it "acquaints a person with what must be done to attain happiness."[887] *Ḥikmah* and *ta'aqqul* then are two principle components of the perfection of man: the former provides the ultimate end, and the latter provides that by which this end is attained.[888]

I would now like to talk briefly about al-Fārābī's conception of philosophy with a particular emphasis on metaphysics. In my previous discussions on al-Kindī's writings, I mentioned that, in his view, the ultimate goal of philosophy is to attain true knowledge of God, and that in most cases he identifies metaphysics with theology. I also noted that al-Kindī regarded the purpose of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* to be an intellectual attempt to establish a philosophical ground for the knowledge of God. As far as we know, it was later al-Fārābī's mission in the history of Islamic philosophy to clarify the real purpose of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (which has been discussed for centuries and is still controversial): Ibn Sīnā attests to this, as I will mention in the following pages, when he expresses his thankfulness and indebtedness to al-Fārābī, who saved him from an overwhelming difficulty with respect to his comprehension of the content and purpose of the *Metaphysics*. Ibn Sīnā states that despite his extremely industrious study on this work, he was not able to understand its real purpose until he was fortunate enough to receive al-Fārābī's work, *fī Aghrāḍ Kitāb Mā ba'd al-ṭabī'ah*, in which the latter explains

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[886] Al-Fārābī, *Fuṣūl al-madanī*, 134.

[887] Ibid., 134.

[888] Ibid., 134. In a more ethical connotation, al-Fārābī describes *ḥikmah* as a virtue of the speculative part of the soul. According to his classification, the human soul has two basic rational components: the rational speculative part (*al-juz' al-nāṭiq al-naẓarī*), and the rational reflective part (*al-juz' al-nāṭiq al-fikrī*). Each of the two has a corresponding virtue (*faḍīlah*): the virtue of the speculative part is speculative intellect (*al-'aql al-naẓarī*), knowledge (*al-'ilm*) and wisdom (*al-ḥikmah*). As for the virtue of the reflective part, it is practical intellect (*al-'aql al-'amalī*), the act of the intellecting (*ta'aqqul*), discernment (*dhihn*), excellence of idea (*jawdat al-ra'y*) and correctness of opinion (*ṣawāb al-ẓann*). Ibid., 124.

the aims of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*.[889] Ibn Sīnā does not provide any further information about the content and comprehensiveness of the *Aghrāḍ* that was available to him, so we are unable to speculate how such a short treatise, as we have it today, could have been of that much use to him. We can nevertheless assert that al-Fārābī's discussions of the *Metaphysics* and its relation to the "divine science" (*al-'ilm al-ilāhī*) or theology (*'ilm al-tawḥīd*) seem to be the fundamental contributions in this regard, for unlike al-Kindī's reduction of *Metaphysics* to theology, al-Fārābī explicitly states that the *Metaphysics* deals in fact with the study of being (*mawjūd*) and its principles and properties, not exclusively with the study of the divine. Al-Fārābī considers such an identification a very common confusion and mistake among intellectual circles, since they expect the entire *Metaphysics* to be about God, intellect and the soul, and other related topics. He asserts that theology is indeed a part of the Aristotelian metaphysics (*mā ba'd al-ṭabī'ah*), but it is not its single or primary subject; instead, metaphysics is a more universal science focusing primarily on the common properties of being *qua* being. Theology is a subject of metaphysics to the extent that "God is a principle of absolute being."[890]

Without indicating his personal position on the issue, al-Fārābī's clarification of the real nature of the Aristotelian metaphysics seems to be an objective scholarly presentation. His description of God as "a", rather than "the", principle of the absolute

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[889] Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah, 438.

[890] Al-Fārābī, *Maqālah fī Aghrāḍ Mā ba'd al-ṭabī'ah*, in *Rasā'il al-Fārābī* (Hyderabad, 1926): 3-5. In his *Kitab al-Jam' bayn ra'yay al-Ḥakīmayn*, al-Fārābī also underlines Aristotle's conception of philosophy as "knowledge of beings as they exist (*al-'ilm bi-al-mawjūdāt bi-mā hiya mawjūdah*)." Al-Fārābī, *Kitab al-Jam' bayn ra'yay al-Ḥakīmayn*, 80. Al-Fārābī's own systematization of metaphysics has three major parts: 1) a part dealing with the existence of beings, namely ontology; 2) a part dealing with immaterial substances, their nature, number, and the degrees of their excellence in being, leading ultimately to the study of the most perfect being, which is the origin and utmost principle of all things, namely theology; 3) a part dealing with the basic principles of demonstration underlying the special sciences. Majid Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy* (New York, 1970): 133-134.

being implies that he was aware of Aristotle's own conception of God, which is evidently not the Islamic one. But in his *Aghrāḍ* he does not express his agreement or disagreement with Aristotle on this point: he simply presents the latter's principle arguments in the *Metaphysics*. Al-Fārābī treats the topic himself in his *al-Siyāsah al-madaniyyah*, in which he outlines the principles of beings and their respective hierarchical order. This work consists of two major parts. In the first part, al-Fārābī deals with the principles of being and their ontological and existential ranking. His lists them under six categories: 1) the First Cause (*al-sabab al-awwal*), 2) the Second Causes (*al-asbāb al-thawānī*), 3) the Active Intellect (*al-'aql al-fa''āl*), 4) the Soul (*al-nafs*), 5) form (*al-ṣūrah*), and 6) matter (*al-māddah*).[891] In the second part, al-Fārābī treats man as a political animal, whose perfection can only be actualized in association with his fellow human beings in the "virtuous city" ruled by just and wise rulers.

Al-Fārābī's list of the principles of being obviously originated from the emanationist cosmology of Neoplatonism. The Aristotelian metaphysics of causation is the essential ontological link between these principles. But, at the same time, a close examination of al-Fārābī's writings indicates his industrious intellectual effort to Islamize his systematization. First of all, his conception of God is not "a" principle of beings anymore, but it is "the" principle; nor is it only the first cause of motion in the universe. This is a conception of God more compatible with the monotheistic formulation of God in Islamic religion. Such an understanding is, therefore, a decisive departure from Aristotle's conception of God, even though the latter is not entirely clear in itself.

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[891] Al-Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Siyāsah al-madaniyyah*, 31.

Al-Fārābī's First Cause (God) is the First Existent (*al-mawjūd al-awwal*) and the Origin as well as the First Cause of the existence of all the other existents. The First is free from every kind of deficiency or imperfection, while everything else is, in one way or another, subject to some kind of imperfection. His existence is thus the most excellent and precedes all other existences. He has the highest kind of excellent existence and the ultimate rank of perfect existence. It is in no way possible that He should not exist. His existence is without a cause, a beginning, or an end. His existence has no purpose nor aim for the sake of which He exists. He is the One and the pure existent. He is not in need of any other thing at all for His existence, while all other things not only derive their existence from His, but they are also dependent continually on His existence. His existence is beyond all the mental categories of man, such as matter, form, and substratum. His existence does not share any qualities with the existence of other things; it is totally different and unique existence.[892] It follows that as a result of its imperfection and its association with matter, human reason cannot apprehend the essence of the First, whose beauty and splendor dazzle it immeasurably. It is only He Himself who can sufficiently comprehend His essence, while human reason may have only limited access to it.[893] Such statements indicate that al-Fārābī's conception of God is beyond Aristotle's "Unmoved Mover." It is true that the primary components of his formulation of God have a Neoplatonic origin – especially with respect to characterizing creation as an emanation, rather than as an origination from nothing – but at the same time it shares the basic attributes of the Qur'anic God, Who possesses ultimate perfection in every sense.

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[892] Al-Fārābī, *Kitāb Ārā' ahl al-madīnah al-fāḍilah*, 37, and Al-Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Siyāsah al-madaniyyah*, 42-43.

[893] Al-Fārābī, *Kitāb Ārā' ahl al-madīnah al-fāḍilah*, 49-50.

Otherwise, strictly philosophically speaking, it is not easy to conciliate Aristotle's first cause with the Islamic God, for the first cause is a pure intellect that is everlastingly busy in intellecting itself and has no concern with the rest of the universe. Al-Fārābī's systematic Islamization of Greek philosophy can also be observed in his discussions on the rest of the principles of beings, and on the Active Intellect in particular.

Al-Fārābī identifies the Active Intellect, which is the last of the celestial intelligences in his emanative scheme, with the Qur'anic "Faithful Spirit (*al-rūḥ al-amīn*)" and "Holy Spirit (*rūḥ al-quds*)",[894] namely, the angel of revelation. This Active Intellect is the means of receiving the ultimate philosophical as well as religious truth, and is thus the indispensable means for attaining true happiness. Al-Fārābī compares the function of the Active Intellect over human intelligence to the action of light on sight and colors. He assigns successive ranks to the human rational soul. In the process of its attainment of intelligibles (*ma'qūlāt*), the rational soul – which is initially an intellect

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[894] Al-Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Siyāsah al-madaniyyah*, 32. In his commentary on *Kitāb Ārā' ahl al-madīnah al-fāḍilah*, Walzer argues that, in this context, al-Fārābī simply equates the separate immaterial intellect with the "angels" or the "spiritual beings" of Islam. In Walzer's view, this is another case of al-Fārābī's understanding of religious terms as symbols for philosophical truth. Walzer asserts that the Greek word *theos* in philosophical texts was frequently translated into Arabic by the word "angels", and that, following this practice, al-Fārābī transformed the pagan Greek gods into Muslim angels. Al-Fārābī, [*Kitāb Ārā' ahl al-madīnah al-fāḍilah, English*] *Al-Farabi on the Perfect State*, ed. and trans. Richard Walzer (Oxford, 1985): 363-364. It seems to me that Walzer oversimplifies a bit al-Fārābī's effort in this regard. It is true that the origins of al-Fārābī's metaphysical and epistemological discussions go back to Neoplatonic and Aristotelian philosophical traditions, just as the majority of his political theories have a Platonic origin. At the same time, however, it is evident that, throughout his discussions, al-Fārābī remodels and rethinks the philosophical conceptions he receives from earlier intellectuals. He does not imprison himself slavishly within their philosophical formulations; rather, he refines and modifies their arguments to present a detailed and coherent philosophical system that could simultaneously be compatible with the basic Islamic doctrines. Al-Fārābī's efforts to integrate philosophy within Islamic intellectual disciplines do not necessarily lead to the conclusion that he simply transforms the pagan Greek religious conceptions into Islamic ones. If al-Fārābi seems to be concerned with presenting philosophy to his contemporary cultural circles as an acceptable intellectual field of study, as long as he introduces a coherent philosophical system, I would let it be so without questioning his motivations, nor oversimplifying his efforts. After all, what he tries to achieve is to present a system which is as inclusive as possible under the historical circumstances in which he lives. In this regard, one might also consider al-Fārābī inclusion of Islamic theology (*kalām*) and jurisprudence (*fiqh*) into his classification of sciences to be an indication of his constant efforts to present an inclusive intellectual system. Al-Fārābī, *Iḥṣā' al-'ulūm*, 130-132.

only in potentiality (*al-'aql bi-al-quwwah*) – becomes "the actual intellect (*al-'aql bi-al-fi'l*)", and then "the acquired intellect (*al-'aql al-mustafād*)" in succession.[895] According to al-Fārābī's philosophical epistemology, this process results in the enlightenment of the human rational soul by the Active Intellect, such an enlightenment being true happiness precisely. But some exceptionally gifted individuals, namely the prophets, are in direct touch with the Active Intellect without being subject to those stages of the human rational soul.[896] This knowledge is more direct and complete than regular philosophical knowledge. In the final analysis, however, Fārābīan epistemology identifies the real natures of religious and philosophical truths, the only difference between them being in the form of representation, for revelation is the symbolic expression of philosophical truth, which cannot be understood by non-philosophers. Or, in other words, a true philosopher gets in touch with the Active Intellect through contemplation, while a prophet experiences the same thing through revelation, and thus that which a true philosopher acquires demonstratively from the Active Intellect is the same thing that a prophet teaches in symbolic form.[897]

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[895] Al-Fārābī, *Kitāb Ārā' ahl al-madīnah al-fāḍilah*, 102-103. For a detailed explanation of al-Fārābī's theory of intellect and his well-known formulation of the Ten Intelligences within an emanationist cosmology, see, Al-Fārābī, *Risalah fī al-'aql*, ed. Maurice Bouyges (Beirut, 1938). This theory of intellect is the basis of the Fārābīan theory of knowledge in general and of prophecy in particular. For a detailed examination of al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā's conceptions of intellect within the Aristotelian philosophical tradition, see Herbert Davidson, "Alfarabi and Avicenna on the Active Intellect" *Viator* 3 (1972): 109-179, and *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes on Intellect: Their Cosmologies, Theories of the Active Intellect, and Theories of Human Intellect* (New York, 1992).

[896] Al-Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Siyāsah al-madaniyyah*, 79. In addition to his purely philosophical concerns, al-Fārābī had other historical motivations to establish a theoretical ground for the institution of prophethood. Ibrahim Madkour states that in the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries a wave of skepticism questioning and refuting revelation and prophephethood was prevalent. Ibn al-Rāwandī and Abu Bakr al-Rāzī were among the leading figures of that movement. Al-Fārābī's particular interest in this matter was a contribution to the intellectual efforts of the mainstream Muslim scholars to disprove the arguments of the adversaries of the prophetic institution and to explain prophecy on a rational ground. Ibrahim Madkour, "Al-Fārābī," *A History of Muslim Philosophy* ed. M. M. Sharif (Wiesbaden, 1963): 465.

[897] Al-Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Millah wa-nuṣūs ukhrā*, ed. Muḥsin Mahdī (Beirut, 1968): 46-47.

At this juncture, al-Fārābī's readers are confronted with his constant reluctance to make direct references to Qur'anic or Prophetic statements. Such is the case especially in his most mature works, i.e., the *Ārā'* and *al-Siyāsah*.[898] How should we interpret this? One might argue that this would be a sign of al-Fārābī's general and methodological preference for philosophical inquiry over religion. But as far as the narrations relating to his lifestyle in general and his practice of philosophy in particular are concerned, such a categorical conclusion is at odds with al-Fārābī's fundamental personal characteristics, for Muslim biographical writers portray him as an extremely ascetic and even spiritual person during his lifetime.[899] Or one might argue that al-Fārābī does not refer to any specific religious scripture because he strives to establish his system on the basis of a universal and philosophical conception of truth. Then *ḥikmah* would perfectly fit into such an argument. In this case, one might interpret the whole Fārābīan philosophical enterprise as an attempt to reach and practice *ḥikmah*, the everlasting search of mankind for truth. My previous note recalling the fact that the earliest Muslim philosophers did not talk about an exclusively Islamic – as opposed to Jewish or Christian – philosophy,

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[898] Al-Fārābī does make references to the Qur'anic statements in his less well-known or authenticity-doubtful writings. See for instance, *Du'ā 'aẓīm* and *min al-As'ilah al-lāmi'ah wa-al-ajwibah al-jāmi'ah* in Al-Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Millah*, 89-92 and 95-115, respectively. In this context, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* is especially noteworthy because it is full of Qur'anic references; see for instance, al-Fārābī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥ Āl Yāsīn (Baghdad, 1976): 60, 62, 63, 68 and 70. P. Kraus and R. Walzer talk negatively with respect to its attribution to al-Fārābī, while Corbin and M. Ḥ. Āl Yāsīn consider *Fuṣūṣ* to be a genuinely Fārābīan work. For the discussions on this issue see, the editor's introduction to al-Fārābī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥ Āl Yāsīn (Baghdad, 1976): 23-26, and Corbin, *History of Islamic Philosophy*, 159-160.

[899] See, for instance, Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah, 603-604.

might shed some further light on the issue. It would follow that al-Fārābī treats philosophy as *ḥikmah* and strives to make his discussions as universal as possible.[900]

When it comes to his personal conception of Islamic religion, al-Fārābī outlines it in his *Kitāb al-Millah* as an ideal actualization of religious as well as philosophical truth. His discussions on prophethood and revelation underlie this conception, which pictures a prophet who engages himself fully in the affairs of his community; al-Fārābī's prophet is not merely a spiritually enlightened person in seclusion, rather he is a leader and founder of the virtuous political regime for his own community in which the ultimate happiness, i.e., *ḥikmah*, is to be realized.[901] In other words, his prophet is a philosopher-prophet, in whose personality man's highest perfection is to be observed, and it is this prophet who links the terrestrial and celestial worlds, which occurs by means of his connection with the Active Intellect. Al-Fārābī's identification of the Active Intellect with the aforementioned Qur'anic figures, as well as his inclusion of *kalām* and *fiqh* in his classification of the sciences,[902] provide further testimony to the basic Islamic components of his philosophical system. Moreover, his characterization of the First Cause, the origin and principle of all other beings, as the Qur'anic God facilitated the reception of his philosophy, explicitly or implicitly, by later Muslim intellectuals in general and by theologians in particular.

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[900] In this context, I should also underline al-Fārābī's recurrent emphasis on logic as a universal criterion for correct reasoning. In his view, the art of logic gives the basic rules to correct the mind and direct man to the (right) way to truth. It thus helps one in distinguishing truth from error and attaining the right way of thinking, as well as teaching other people the same rules. Al-Fārābī, *Iḥṣā' al-'ulūm*, 53-55.

[901] Al-Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Millah*, 43-44.

[902] Al-Fārābī, *Iḥṣā' al-'ulūm*, 130-132.

Through my previous discussions of the actual character of al-Fārābī's philosophical system, by no means am I attempting to dephilosophize al-Fārābī's conception of religion. No doubt, his conception of religion is philosophical in nature, one whose principle components are derived from the Hellenistic intellectual legacy. What I am trying to underline is that he should not be characterized as just a rationalist or political philosopher in the modern senses of the words.[903] Nor should he be portrayed as a logician alone. Rather, he presents a comprehensive philosophical system, the methodological framework of which is of Greek origin, but whose main concerns are religiously oriented at the same time. His attempt at a reconciliation between philosophy and religion has two starting-points moving from the edges of the two fields towards a converging point. Al-Fārābī relates metaphysics to politics and ethics in an organic unity, and thus conceptualizes it as an extension and practice in a real and virtuous human society. On the one hand, al-Fārābī's formulations of the Peripatetic tradition within a heavily Neoplatonic garment help him in presenting his philosophical ideas as more compatible with Islamic doctrines; on the other hand, he gives philosophical explanations of religious concepts, especially of God and revelation. Al-Fārābī's philosophical expositions in this regard gave Islamic philosophy its direction in the following centuries. Later Muslim philosophers, especially Ibn Sīnā, elaborated al-Fārābī's characteristically brief and concise philosophical formulations.

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[903] Al-Fārābī's political philosophy represents his formulations of an ideal practice of philosophical truths under this-worldly conditions. He in fact uses the expressions "practical philosophy (*al-falsafah al-'amaliyyah*)" and "political/civil philosophy (*al-falsafah al-madaniyyah*)" interchangeably. Al-Fārābī, *Risālat al-Tanbīh 'alā taḥṣīl al-sa'ādah*, 224-225. For an overview of al-Fārābī's delicate balance between philosophy and religion see, Mahdi, "Alfarabi on Philosophy and Religion," *The Philosophical Forum* 4.1 (1972): 5-25.

Al-Fārābī's philosophical formulations pertaining to God and revelation aroused intense religious objections in Muslim scholarly circles, especially from al-Ghazālī. His conception of an emanative cosmology has serious conflicts with Islamic dogmas in relation to the Godhead and His attributes. Al-Fārābī's cosmology presupposes that the world proceeds from God in a series of successive intelligences constituting a hierarchical chain of being. Starting from the First Cause, Who is the Intellect of intellects, the existence of every intellect (ten in number) is caused through emanation by the higher intellect, while at the same time that intellect itself is the cause of the succeeding lower intellect. Al-Fārābī thus reduces everything to intellect: his conceptions of God, celestial bodies, and the Active Intellect are all intellects, and their ontological relations are explained by way of the theory of emanation. This theory, however, has certain constituents incompatible with Islamic religious tenets. First of all, al-Fārābī's God is no longer a Creator of the universe from nothing, nor does He create by His will. Rather, as a result of His self-contemplation, an emanation (*fayḍ*) from Him occurs by itself; He is the Intellect that intellects/comprehends Itself.[904]

Coming back to my main point in discussing al-Fārābī's writings in relation to *ḥikmah*, I might add another traditional treatment of *ḥikmah* found in his writings. In the introduction to this chapter, I have mentioned that Muslim philosophers treat *ḥikmah* as a very high degree of knowledge that should not be improperly divulged to uninitiated people, nor to undeserving and ignorant persons. In this context, al-Fārābī illustrates their general strategy. He argues that, because it is based on demonstrative methods, the

[904] For al-Fārābī's conception of God as "Intellect", see, Al-Fārābī, *Kitāb Ārā' ahl al-madīnah al-fāḍilah*, 46-48. On the basis of al-Fārābī's "intellectualism" in this fashion, some modern scholars characterize his philosophy as spiritualistic and idealistic. Madkour, 467.

absolute *ḥikmah* (literally, the first science) is not within the reach of every person. Rather, it is only the elect (*khāṣṣah*) of the community who [can] properly enjoy this science. The rest of the sciences address the vulgar (*'āmmah*), as they are based either on persuasion or representation by way of images so that they become facilitated in the instruction of the masses or the multitude of the nations (*jumhūr al-umam*). In al-Fārābī's view, unlike the elect, the vulgar should confine themselves to theoretical cognitions that are in conformity with unexamined common opinion (*bādi' al-ra'y al-mushtarak*). Thus the methods of persuasion (*iqnā'iyyah*) and imaginative representation (*takhyīlāt*) are used in the instruction of the vulgar and the multitude of the nations. The elect, on the other hand, reach their conviction and knowledge through premises (*muqaddamāt*) based on a complete intellectual pursuit, for in their theoretical cognitions they do not confine themselves merely to that which is in conformity with unexamined common opinion. The demonstrative methods, therefore, are used in the instruction of those who belong to the elect.[905] As for the masses, who are the citizens of al-Fārābī's "ignorant cities", he does not seem very much concerned with their position in this world, nor in the world to come. He even argues that the souls of the citizens of "ignorant cities" will simply disintegrate after death, for their souls remain in a state of imperfection and need matter in order to keep their existence alive. Once they lose this material substratum, their souls, being dependent on it, will lose their existence and perish.[906]

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[905] Al-Fārābī, *Taḥṣīl al-sa'ādah*, 36-38.

[906] Al-Fārābī, *Kitāb Ārā' ahl al-madīnah al-fāḍilah*, 142-144.

Al-Fārābī's philosophical discussions with respect to such an elitist classification of human beings have found various interpretations in modern scholarship. Ibrāhīm Madkour, for instance, interprets al-Fārābī's approach as indicating that the latter was in favor of esoteric teaching and believed that philosophy should not be made available to the uninitiated among the masses. Furthermore, Madkour continues, following a venerable tradition, al-Fārābī expounded his ideas garbed in obscurity, mystification, and ambiguity.[907]

Another group of scholars, on the other hand, following Leo Strauss, situate Islamic philosophy in general and Fārābīan philosophy in particular within the context of a conflict between religion and philosophy. They argue that, depending on the social context in which they lived, these philosophers communicated or withheld their philosophical knowledge, which included in itself secret doctrines meant to be concealed from non-philosophical minds; otherwise, if they would express this knowledge without any reservation, they could be persecuted in their societies. Gutas designates this tendency as "the political approach" and names as its leading representatives Mahdi[908] and Butterworth.[909] According to Gutas' argument, these scholars misinterpret the whole history of Arabic philosophy under the influence of Socrates' tragic experience. They assume that philosophers writing in Arabic worked in a hostile environment and had to

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[907] Madkour, 453.

[908] See, for instance, Mahdi, *The Political Orientation of Islamic Philosophy* (Washington, 1982).

[909] See, for instance, Charles Butterworth, "Rhetoric and Islamic Political Philosophy," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 3 (1972): 187-198.

present their views not only as being in conformity with Islamic religious precepts, but also in disguise.[910]

I share with Gutas his uneasiness with such a reading of the history of Islamic philosophy, as it is contradicted by historical facts. According to our current knowledge in the field, with the exception of al-Suhrawardī – whose sufferings may well not have been only the result of his philosophical beliefs – there is not a single philosopher who was persecuted for his philosophical convictions.[911] We know further that in the earliest days of the translation or the Greek philosophical heritage into Arabic, the practicioners of Islamic philosophy worked under royal protection, rather than under duress. As far as al-Fārābī's particular case is concerned, therefore, I am not inclined to think that he concealed his real philosophical ideas or formulated them under the guise of religion to find for himself a form of protection for his philosophical activities. Instead, I think that he was acting in accordance with a long-standing tradition of protecting philosophy as *ḥikmah* from the misunderstanding and misrepresentation of undeserving and unqualified people.

V. Ibn Sīnā (d. 428/1037): *ḥikmah* in the view of "The Head-Master"

Throughout his philosophical works, Ibn Sīnā uses the word *ḥikmah* in the sense of philosophy in general and of metaphysics in particular.[912] In the former case, he

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[910] Gutas, "The Study of Arabic Philosophy in the Twentieth Century," 19-20.

[911] Ibid., 21.

[912] See, for instance, Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā: al-Ilāhiyyāt*, eds. Georges C. Anawātī, et al. (Cairo, 1960): 3, 443. Accordingly, Ibn Sīnā uses the word *ḥukamā'* and *ḥakīm* to refer to philosophers in general and to Aristotle in particular. See, for instance, Ibn Sīnā, *Kitāb al-Ḥudūd*, ed. A.-M. Coichon (Cairo, 1963): 4 and 10 respectively. He also uses the word *ḥikmah* in the sense of sagacity (Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā: al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 50), and of divine wisdom (Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā: al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 421, 443, 446). I should acknowledge that

defines *ḥikmah* as "the perfecting of the human soul through the conceptualization of things and the assention of theoretical and practical truths insofar as it is possible for man."[913] This definition indicates that Ibn Sīnā's conception of philosophy is also *ḥikmah*, which presupposes combining knowledge with action.[914] In this context, his reference to the Qur'anic verse 2:269, in which those who are given *ḥikmah* are characterized as being given much good, further testifies to the fact that Ibn Sīnā treats philosophy as Islamic *ḥikmah* as well.[915] In the latter case, just like al-Kindī and al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā identifies *ḥikmah* with metaphysics and designates it as "the first philosophy (*al-falsafah al-ūlā*)"[916] and "the divine science (*al-'ilm al-ilāhī*)"[917]. When it comes to the purpose of philosophy, he explains it as "attaining knowledge of the true natures of all things insofar as is possible for man."[918]

Following the preceding philosophical tradition, Ibn Sīnā classifies philosophical sciences under two major categories: the theoretical (*naẓariyyah*) and the practical

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throughout my translations from *al-Shifā': al-Ilāhiyyāt*, I have also benefited from Marmura's translation of the work: Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of the Healing: a parallel English-Arabic text = al-Ilāhiyyāt min al-Shifā'*, translated, introduced, and annotated by M. Marmura (Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2005).
In his introduction to logic, Ibn Sīnā states that unlike the conventional scholarly practices of his time, he will not explain the principles of logic (*mabādi' al-manṭiq*) in the section on logic in his *al-Shifā'*, but rather, he thinks that these principles should be explained in the part on metaphysics, or, in his own words, *al-ṣinā'ah al-ḥikamiyyah*, i.e., *al-falsafah al-ūlā*. Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā: al-Manṭiq, al-Madkhal*, eds. Georges C. Anawātī, et al. (Cairo, 1952): 10.

[913] Ibn Sīnā, *'Uyūn al-ḥikmah*, ed. Muwaffak F. al-Jabr (Damascus, 1996): 63.

[914] Such combination was not unknown to the Greek Sages either; for according to their encyclopedic conception of sciences, philosophy is to be united with the study of nature, and the perfection of man is to be manifested in both knowledge and action. Goichon "Ibn Sīnā" in *EI²*.

[915] Ibn Sīnā, *'Uyūn al-ḥikmah*, 64.

[916] Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā: al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 3.

[917] Ibid., 4, 5.

[918] Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā: al-Manṭiq, al-Madkhal*, 12.

(*'amaliyyah*). In the theoretical sciences, an inquirer seeks the perfecting of the theoretical faculty of the soul through the attainment of the intellect in action (*bi-ḥuṣūl al-'aql bi-al-fi'l*), which occurs by way of the attainment of conceptual (*taṣawwurī*) and assentual (*taṣdīqī*) knowledge of things, whose existence is independent of human actions and states. Thus, the aim of the inquirer into these things is to attain an opinion (*ra'y*) and a belief (*i'tiqād*) which is not dependent on his own action in any way. As for the practical sciences, one seeks in them first the perfection of the theoretical faculty by attaining conceptual and verifiable knowledge pertaining to things that are dependent on human actions, and thereby one seeks second the perfection of the practical faculty through morals (*akhlāq*).[919] According to Ibn Sīnā's explanation, the purpose of theoretical philosophy is "the knowledge of the truth (*ma'rifat al-ḥaqq*)", while the purpose of practical philosophy is "the knowledge of the good (*ma'rifat al-khayr*)."[920] In his view, therefore, theoretical philosophy focuses on things as they are, while practical philosophy focuses on human actions as they ought to be.

Ibn Sīnā states that theoretical knowledge is confined to three divisions: the natural (*ṭabī'ī*), the mathematical (*ta'līmī*), and the divine (*ilāhī*). The divine science differs from the first two in its exclusive investigation of the things that are separable

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[919] Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā: al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 3-4. In the section on logic in his *al-Shifā'*, Ibn Sīnā introduces the same categorization, saying that the existence of existent things are either independent on our choice (*ikhtiyār*) and action (*fi'l*), or they are dependent on our choice and action. The knowledge of the former is called theoretical philosophy, while the knowledge of the latter is called practical philosophy. The purpose of theoretical philosophy is the perfecting of the soul through knowledge only, whereas the purpose of practical philosophy is not only knowledge but also putting this knowledge in action. The purpose of theoretical philosophy is, thus, belief in an opinion (*i'tiqādu ra'yin*), not action, while the purpose of practical philosophy is the knowledge of the opinion of that action. It follows, Ibn Sīnā argues, that theoretical philosophy is more closely related to "opinion". Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā: al-Manṭiq, al-Madkhal*, 12. In his *'Uyūn al-ḥikmah*, Ibn Sīnā introduces the same classification of philosophical sciences, but this time, instead of the word *falsafah*, he uses *ḥikmah* to refer philosophy. Ibn Sīnā, *'Uyūn al-ḥikmah*, 63-64.

[920] Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā: al-Manṭiq, al-Madkhal*, 14.

from matter in substance and definition.[921] It is the divine science in which the first causes of natural and mathematical existence and what relates to them are investigated, and in which the Cause of causes and Principle of principles, namely God, is investigated.[922] Ibn Sīnā defines the divine science as philosophy in the real sense. He further describes it as the first philosophy, the science that imparts validation to the principles of the rest of the sciences, and as *ḥikmah* in reality.[923]

Ibn Sīnā gives three definitions of this *ḥikmah*: 1) "the best knowledge of the best object of knowledge (*afḍalu 'ilmin bi-afḍali ma'lūmin*);"[924] 2) "the most correct and perfect knowledge (*al-ma'rifah allatī hiya aṣaḥḥu ma'rifatihā wa-atqanuhā*);"[925] and 3) "knowledge of the first causes of all things (*al-'ilm bi-al-asbāb al-ūlā li-al-kull*)."[926] According to Ibn Sīnā's statement, these three definitions refer to the same art, namely,

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[921] Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā: al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 4. Ibn Sīnā underlines that the subject matter of the natural is bodies, with regard to their being in motion and at rest, while the subject matter of mathematics is quantity, either a quantity which is essentially abstracted from matter, or a quantity which has quantity itself. Ibid., 4, and 10-12. See also, Ibn Sīnā, *'Uyūn al-ḥikmah*, 63. In his *Kitāb al-Ta'līqāt*, Ibn Sīnā divides "being (*mawjūd*)" into two kinds: separate (*mufāriq*) and non-separate (*ghayr mufāriq*). The former is peculiar to the science of the divine, which investigates beings free of matter and provides universal (*kullī*) knowledge, while the latter are the subject matter of all the other sciences which produce partial (*juz'ī*) knowledge. Ibn Sīnā, *Kitāb al-Ta'līqāt*, ed. Ḥasan M. al-'Ubaydī (Baghdad, 2002): 147-148. Ibn Sīnā argues, therefore, that all sciences other than the divine science provide only partial (*juz'ī*) knowledge on the basis of a certain state of the beings. Ibn Sīnā, *Kitāb al-Najāt*, ed. Majid Fakhry (Beirut, 1985): 235.

[922] Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā: al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 4.

[923] Ibid., 5. As for the divisions of practical philosophy, Ibn Sīnā classifies them under three categories as well: a) politics (*tadbīr al-madīnah* or *'ilm al-siyāsah*), which teaches the opinions regulating public relations in a human community, b) household management (*tadbīr al-manzil*), which teaches the opinions relating to domestic life, and c) ethics (*akhlāq*), which teaches the opinions regulating an individual's state with respect to purifying his soul. Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā: al-Manṭiq, al-Madkhal*, 14. For the same categorization see, Ibn Sīnā, *'Uyūn al-ḥikmah*, 63.

[924] Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā: al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 5.

[925] Ibid., 5.

[926] Ibid., 5.

the divine science, which is the first philosophy and absolute *ḥikmah* (*al-ḥikmah al-muṭlaqah*).[927]

As far as the subject matter of the divine science is concerned, Ibn Sīnā argues that the existence of God is just one of the things, not the only thing, sought in this science.[928] He phrases its subject matter as "being", which is the first and most essential concept of the mind that does not need any prior explanation.[929] The subject matter of the divine science is, thus, "the existent inasmuch as it is an existent (*al-mawjūd bi-mā huwa mawjūd*),"[930] and the things sought after in this science are those that come unconditionally with the existent, inasmuch as it is an existent.[931] When it comes to the existence of God specifically in relation to the divine science, Ibn Sīnā conceptualizes it within the framework of the concept of "being". One should keep always in mind, however, that, according to Ibn Sīnānian ontology, the most complete and perfect being is God, Who deserves to be called the Absolute Being (*al-mawjūd al-muṭlaq*), and in this regard the divine science does investigate the existence of God. Starting from the Absolute Being, the divine science also investigates the principles of the other sciences.[932]

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[927] Ibid., 5.

[928] Ibid., 5. For a detailed logical explanation of the reason why the existence of God cannot literally be admitted as the subject matter of the divine science see, Ibid., 5- 9.

[929] Ibn Sīnā, *Kitāb al-Najāt*, 235. For Ibn Sīnā's detailed discussions on "being" and its kinds (the necessary existent [*wājib al-wujūd*], the possible existent [*mumkin al-wujūd*]) see, Ibn Sīnā, *al-Mabda' wa-al-ma'ād*, ed. 'Abd Allāh Nūrānī (Tehran, 1984): 1-23.

[930] Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā: al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 13.

[931] Ibid., 13.

[932] Ibn Sīnā, *Kitāb al-Najāt*, 235. For a detailed scholarly presentation of the history of the metaphysics of Ibn Sīnā see, Robert Wisnovsky, *Avincenna's Metaphysics in Context* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003). For Ibn Sīnā's reception of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* particularly in his *al-Shifā'* see, Amos

From Ibn Sīnā's definition of the subject matter of the divine science as "the existent inasmuch as it is existent", it follows that the divine science investigates the states of the existent (*aḥwāl al-mawjūd*). He calls this science "the first philosophy" on account of the fact that it is the knowledge of the first thing in existence, i.e., the First Cause, and of the first thing in generality (*fī al-'umūm*), i.e., existence and unity. It is also *ḥikmah*, which means the best knowledge of the best thing known. *Ḥikmah* deserves to be designated as "the best knowledge of the best thing known" because it is knowledge that yields certainty (*yaqīn*) of God and the causes after Him. The divine science is also knowledge of the ultimate causes of all existent things. Ibn Sīnā further describes this science as "knowledge of God (*al-ma'rifah bi-Allāh*)" and states that since it consists of a knowledge of the things that are separable from matter in definition and existence, it is called "the divine science".[933] As far as its significance in relation to other sciences is concerned, Ibn Sīnā asserts that, in its own right, the divine science should be prior to all the other sciences, but, from the human perspective, it is posterior to all of them.[934] To put it another way, the divine science is in fact the most prestigious and advanced science, but when it comes to its acquisition by human beings, it is the most difficult and sophisticated science, which necessitates the pre-acquisition of the knowledge acquired in all the other sciences.

Bertolacci, *The Reception of Aristotle's Metaphysics in Avicenna's Kitāb al-Shifā': A Milestone of Western Metaphysical Thought* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2006).

[933] Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā: al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 15.

[934] Ibid., 21. For a comparative analysis of the subject-matter of metaphysics in the philosophies of Aristotle and Ibn Sīnā, see Fakhry, "The Subject-Matter of Metaphysics: Aristotle and Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna)," *Islamic Theology and Philosophy: Studies in Honor of George F. Hourani*, ed. Michael Marmura (Albany, 1984): 137-147.

Through the divine science, Ibn Sīnā strives to establish philosophical proofs for the existence of the First Principle, to show that He is one, Truth, and utmost majesty, and to explain the true nature of His attributes, including His oneness, knowledge, power, generosity, and pure goodness. In this science, Ibn Sīnā explicates His relation to the existents that proceed from Him in hierarchical ranks, starting from the angelic intellectual substances (*al-jawāhir al-malakiyyah al-'aqliyyah*), followed by the celestial spherical substances all the way down to man. It is also through this science that Ibn Sīnā elucidates the nature of the dependence of all things on the First Principle, and discusses the condition of the human soul with respect to its rank in existence and to the prestigious position of prophetic institution and knowledge. It is still in this science that Ibn Sīnā deals with the morals and actions which, together with *ḥikmah* (wisdom), are needed by the human soul for attaining happiness in the hereafter, and with the different types of happiness.[935]

In Ibn Sīnānian philosophical terminology, besides its use in the sense of theoretical philosophy (*al-ḥikmah al-naẓariyyah*), *ḥikmah* also has an ethical connotation in practical philosophy, or, *al-ḥikmah al-'amaliyyah*. In this context, *ḥikmah* is the third virtue, in addition to temperance (*'iffah*) and courage (*shajā'ah*). Unlike *al-ḥikmah al-naẓariyyah*, in which the means of the attainment of the abovementioned objective is independent of human actions and states, in *al-ḥikmah al-'amaliyyah* it is this-worldly actions and behavior that lead to the perfecting of the human soul. Ibn Sīnā describes any

[935] Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā: al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 27-28.

[strictly] intellectual efforts to concentrate on (knowledge of) *al-ḥikmah al-'amaliyyah* as futile attempts and deception, for this type of *ḥikmah* is *ḥikmah* in action.[936]

Ibn Sīnā further contextualizes the function of this *ḥikmah* in the context of the ethical virtues. He lists the motivating powers (*dawā'ī*) of man under three major kinds: the appetitive/desirous (*shahwāniyyah*), the irascible (*ghaḍabiyyah*), and the practical (*tadbīriyyah*). It follows that the virtues consist of three things: 1) moderation in such appetites as the pleasures of sex (*mankūḥ*), food (*maṭ'ūm*), clothing (*malbūs*), and comfort (*rāḥah*), as well as sensual (*ḥissiyyah*) and imaginal/estimative (*wahmiyyah*) pleasures; 2) moderation in all the irascible passions, such as fear (*khawf*), anger (*ghaḍab*), depression (*ghamm*), pride (*anafah*), rancor (*ḥiqd*), jealousy (*ḥasad*), and the like; and 3) moderation in practical matters (*tadbīriyyah*). At the head of these virtues, Ibn Sīnā continues, stand temperance, practical wisdom (*ḥikmah*), and courage; their sum is justice (*'adālah*), which, however, is extraneous to theoretical virtue (*khārijah 'an al-faḍīlah al-naẓariyyah*). According to Ibn Sīnā's explanation, whoever combines theoretical wisdom with justice is indeed a happy man, and whoever, in addition to this, receives the prophetic qualities becomes almost a human god (*kāda an-yuṣira rabban insāniyyan*), who may almost be worshipped, after the worship of God. Ibn Sīnā calls such a man the world's earthly king (*sulṭān al-'ālam al-arḍī*) and God's deputy in it (*khalīfat Allāh fīhi*).[937]

Ibn Sīnā's treatment of *ḥikmah* as a very precious thing to be protected firmly from unworthy and unqualified people – a traditional practice, as I have noted previously

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[936] Ibid., 455.

[937] Ibid., 455. For a detailed analysis of Ibn Sīnā's conception of prophethood, see Fazlur Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam: Philosophy and Orthodoxy* (London, 1958).

– can be observed in his discussions on prophethood. In his view too, religious and philosophical truths are essentially the same, for religion expresses philosophical truth in the language of symbols and images. But a prophet must avoid using philosophical language in his speech to the masses to the extent that he must even refrain from mentioning to them that there is knowledge that is beyond their reach and hidden from them. Rather, Ibn Sīnā continues, a prophet is expected to let the masses know of God's majesty and greatness through symbols and similitudes based on their conventional understanding of majesty and greatness. A prophet is expected likewise to bring metaphysical concepts, including the real natures of the resurrection and the afterlife, closer to their understanding by way of parables derived from what they can comprehend and conceive.[938] In this contex, Ibn Sīnā makes reference to the practice of the foremost Greek philosophers and prophets who made use of symbols and signs in their works in which they hid their secret doctrines. He lists Pythagoras, Socrates, and Plato as having done so. According to Ibn Sīnā's narration, Aristotle abandoned – only to a certain extent – this tradition in Greece, for Plato blamed Aristotle for divulging *ḥikmah* and making knowledge manifest, in response to which Aristotle asserted that even though he had done so, he still left many intricate statements in his books which can only be comprehended by distinguished intellectuals. Ibn Sīnā applies the same practice to the Islamic religion and says that there is nothing unusual in the case of the Prophet, who brought knowledge [i.e., *ḥikmah*] first to the uneducated nomad and then to the whole human race.[939]

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[938] Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā: al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 443.

[939] Ibn Sīnā, *Risālah fī Ithbāt al-Nubuwwāt*, ed. Michael Marmura (Beirut, 1991): 48.

Unlike in the case of al-Fārābī, I have not come across any full-fledged account with respect to the history of philosophy in Ibn Sīnā's major philosophical writings.[940] Throughout his works, he most frequently mentions Aristotle, usually under the appelletion "the First Teacher (*al-mu'allim al-awwal*)."[941] It seems that, in Ibn Sīnā's view, philosophy was no longer a new scholarly field, and therefore he does not bother himself with presenting historical information about the origin or development of philosophy from its beginning down to his own lifetime. Instead, he mentions the names of the ancient philosophers only when the context of his argument requires it.[942] He therefore does not seem to be so much interested in the history of philosophy as he is in the ideas themselves. This occurrence could also be a result of Ibn Sīnā's very unstable life-style, itself a result of the political situation of his time. For, according to his student Abū 'Ubayd al-Juzjānī, Ibn Sīnā used to write his works under very uncomfortable conditions, sometimes in prison, sometimes in hiding, and other times en route. Most of the time, his sole reference was his memory, since he did not have the luxury of being able to check his writings with the original works, some of which he had read many years ago.[943] Or it could be a result of the fact that we no longer possess a number of Ibn

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[940] Neither does Gutas mention any detailed account with respect to Ibn Sīnā's conception of the history of philosophy and the philosophical figures of the antiquity. Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988): 199-218.

[941] See, for instance, Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā: al-Manṭiq, al-Madkhal*, 59; Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā: al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 333, 392. Ibn Sīnā also calls Aristotle "the Logician (*ṣāḥib al-manṭiq*)", Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā: al-Manṭiq, al-Madkhal*, 11, and "the Foremost Philosopher (*al-faylasūl al-muqaddam*)", Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā: al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 122.

[942] See for instance Ibn Sīnā's mention of Socrates and Plato within the context of his expositions on the principles of mathematics, Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā: al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 311-312.

[943] Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā: al-Manṭiq, al-Madkhal*, 1-4. For al-Juzjānī's account see also, Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah, 440-445. I might need to note that Ibn Sīnā's sufferings had nothing to do with his philosophical ideas, but with his political connections with the leaders of the regions where he lived. Since he held high

Sīnā's comprehensive works, such as his voluminous *Kitāb al-Inṣāf*[944] and *al-Ḥikmah al-mashriqiyyah*, of which we have only a fragment. Especially in the case of the former, it is possible that he might have explained his conception of the history of philosophy and his reception of the ancient philosophical figures.

Without going into the controversial discussions on the real nature of Ibn Sīnā's philosophy[945] in detail, I would like to talk briefly about his perception of philosophy and his self-consciousness with respect to it. In his Prologue to *al-Shifā'*, Ibn Sīnā states that, in addition to *al-Shifā'* and *al-Lawāḥiq*, in which he deals with philosophy in a conventional Peripatetic way, he wrote a book in which he presented philosophy "in accordance with inborn cognitive disposition (*'alā mā hiya fī al-ṭab'*)."[946] According to Ibn Sīnā's statement in that book, which he named *al-Falsafah al-Mashriqiyyah* – known as *al-Hikmah al-Mashriqiyyah* as well – he held an unbiased intellectual position towards Peripatetic philosophers: he did not support them unconditionally, nor did he take precautions against disagreeing with them, as he did in his other works. Ibn Sīnā directs those who want the truth (*ḥaqq*) clearly and straightforwardly to focus on *al-Falsafah al-*

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administrative positions under the service of those leaders, Ibn Sīnā was a target of the political authorities who overthrew his patrons. Otherwise, he was not persecuted for his philosophical beliefs.

[944] According to al-Juzjānī record, this work was lost during Mas'ūd's, the son of Maḥmūd of Ghaznah, seizure of Isfahan when Ibn Sīnā's baggage was plundered. Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah, 444. For the corpus of Ibn Sīnā's works see, Georges Anawātī, *Mu'allafāt Ibn Sīnā* (Cairo, 1950); Yaḥyā Mahdavī *Bibliographie d'Ibn Sīnā* (Tehran, 1954); Osman Ergin, *Ibn Sīnā Bibliografyasi* (Istanbul, 1937); Jules Janssens, *An Annotated Bibliography of Ibn Sīnā (1970-1989) Including Arabic and Persian Publications and Turkish and Russian References* (Leuven, 1991); and Suhayl Afnan, *Avicenna, His Life and Works* (London, 1958).

[945] For these discussions see, Gutas, "The Study of Arabic Philosophy in the Twentieth Century," 5-25.

[946] Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā: al-Manṭiq, al-Madkhal*, 10.

Mashriqiyyah.[947] This account has been a hotly-debated subject, especially because the work has not survived to our day in its complete form. What were the essential characteristics of this Eastern Philosophy? What were the qualities of those Easterners? How did they differ from regular Peripatetic philosophers? Ibn Ṭufayl (d. 581/1185) in his turn used Ibn Sīnā's expression *al-ḥikmah al-mashriqiyyah* as a subtitle of his Ḥayy b. Yaqẓān, *On the Secrets of the Eastern Philosophy* (*Risālat Ḥayy b. Yaqẓān Fī asrār al-Ḥikmah al-Mashriqiyyah*), and interpreted it in a mystical way.[948] In Gutas's view, Ibn Ṭufayl's interpretation paved the way in the later philosophical tradition for attributing two kinds of philosophy to Ibn Sīnā: one exoteric, rational and Aristotelian, and the other esoteric, mystical and 'Oriental'.[949] Gutas asserts that at the end of the nineteenth century, A.F. Mehren took up this point and carried it to the twentieth century, especially to Corbin, and then to Nasr.[950]

Throughout his well-documented book *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, Gutas argues that the distinction Ibn Sīnā draws between *al-Shifā'* and *al-Falsafah al-Mashriqiyyah* is only stylistic: in the former, he uses an expository and analytic language, while in the latter he uses a dogmatic language. Accordingly, the former contains all the

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[947] Ibid., 10. Originally, *al-Falsafah al-Mashriqiyyah* contained four parts on Logic, Physics, and Metaphysics, but only *Manṭiq al-Mashriqiyyīn* is extant today. Ibn Sīnā, *Manṭiq al-Mashriqiyyīn*, ed. Shukrī al-Najjār (Beirut, 1982).

[948] For a brief analysis of both works titled Ḥayy b. Yaqẓān see, Goichon, "Ḥayy b. Yaqẓān" in *EI²*.

[949] This point is elaborately discussed in Gutas, "Avicenna's Eastern ('Oriental') Philosophy: Nature Contents, Transmission," *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 10 (2000): 159-180.

[950] Gutas, "The Study of Arabic Philosophy in the Twentieth Century," 16-19. For Corbin's discussions on Ibn Sīnā and his "Oriental philosophy" see, Corbin, *History of Islamic Philosophy*, 167-175, and *Avicenna an the Visionary Recital*, trans. W. R. Trask (Irving, 1980): 271-278. For Nasr's designation of Ibn Sīnā's *al-hikmah al-mashriqiyyah* as "Oriental philosophy" see, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Ibn Sīnā's 'Oriental Philosophy'" *History of Islamic Philosophy*, eds. Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman (London, 2001): 247-251, and *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines* (Albany, 1993): 187ff.

main philosophical discussions in line with the history of Aristotelianism, whereas the latter includes only those philosophical theories that Ibn Sīnā considers to be true. In addition to this difference in representation, Gutas continues, by "Easterners" Ibn Sīnā was referring to the philosophers working in the East (*Mashriq*), namely to the Khurāsānian philosophers, including himself. In the final analysis, Gutas argues, there is one single type of philosophical practice embraced by Ibn Sīnā, and it is Aristotelian in nature.[951]

These controversial writings on Ibn Sīnā's *al-Falsafah al-Mashriqiyyah* have relevance to my own discussions on Ibn Sīnā's philosophy only to the extent that they shed light on Ibn Sīnā's reception and perception of philosophy. It is true that Ibn Sīnā's

[951] Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, 1-8, 43-44, and 115-130. See also Gutas, "The Study of Arabic Philosophy in the Twentieth Century," 9. Goichon, on the other hand, sees the loss of this work as an "irreparable lacuna" in reaching a conclusive argument concerning the real nature of Ibn Sīnā's own philosophy, for he clearly states that he wishes to complete, and even correct, Aristotle. Goichon speculates on this issue and says, "We may suppose that he wished to make room for the oriental scientific tradition, which was more experimental than Greek science. The small alterations made to Aristotelian logic are slanted in this direction." Goichon, "Ibn Sīnā". Marmura, in his turn, finds inconclusive arguments as well as critical misunderstandings of Ibn Sīnā's terminology in Gutas' work *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*. Marmura acknowledges the contribution of Gutas' work to Avicennan studies, but at the same time, he raises serious questions regarding its accuracy and representive quality of real Avicennan thought. Marmura mentions, for instance, Gutas' discussion of Ibn Sīnā's theory of intuition (*ḥads*) which holds a central role in Ibn Sīnā's psychology, epistemology, metaphysics and his conception of philosophy. Marmura argues that Gutas's fixed translation of *ḥads* as "intuition" misses the close relationship between *ḥads* and *fiṭrah* (natural intelligence, the inborn cognitive disposition) in Avicennan terminology on the one hand, and its delicately-balanced interrelation with *'ilm*, *ma'rifah*, and *dhawq* on the other. Marmura thus criticizes Gutas' tendency to assign a fixed single meaning to each term, which leads to a rigidity in translating the texts. For Marmura's discussions see, Marmura, "Plotting the Course of Avicenna's Thought," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 111.2 (1991): 333-342. As far as the real nature of Ibn Sīnā's philosophy is concerned, Marmura regards Gutas' monolithic interpretation of the Avicennan corpus as incomprehensive, for the latter does not pay attention to Ibn Sinā's subtle expressions throughout his works. Marmura mentions, for example, Ibn Sina's usage of *ma'rifah* in *al-Ishārāt* and its relation to *'ilm*, *dhawq*, and *ḥads*. In the last three sections of the *Ishārāt* (namely, the eighth, ninth, and tenth), Ibn Sīnā talks about *ma'rifah* and *'ārifūn* (knowers), but his statements should not be confined to intuition of the intelligible order, as Gutas presents them in his work. Rather, Marmura argues, Ibn Sīnā's conception of *ma'rifah* goes beyond the semantic limits assigned to it by Gutas. In the ninth section, there is no direct reference to *ḥads*, but Ibn Sīnā talks about further epistemological steps (*darajāt*) or stages (*maqāmāt*) for the *'ārif*, which cannot be expressed in language. In this regard, Marmura finds Gutas' work incomprehensive in terms of presenting a full-fledged portrayal of Ibn Sīnā's philosophy, as the latter does not elaborate Ibn Sīnā's statements in the last sections of *al-Ishārāt*. Marmura, "Plotting the Course of Avicenna's Thought," 340-343.

philosophical system is Aristotelian, but it is equally true that his philosophy is Neoplatonic and Islamic. Furthermore, as Goichon properly argues, Ibn Sīnā is a believer and, following the Qur'anic precepts, he believes in God as the Creator – a notion quite foreign to the pagan philosophers of antiquity. Throughout his philosophical formulations, Ibn Sīnā strives continually to integrate religious dogmas within them. His success in this attempt is debatable, but his persistence is not.[952]

As I have pointed out earlier, Ibn Sīnā clearly refers to the Qur'anic concept of *ḥikmah* in his definition of philosophy. It seems that, depending on his audience, Ibn Sīnā calibrates the clarity and Islamic tone of his philosophical articulations. Compared to *al-Shifā'*, for instance, *al-Ishārāt wa-al-Tanbīhāt* contains very compressed and symbolic expressions which are difficult to decipher. Ibn Sīnā himself acknowledges this fact. He opens *al-Ishārāt* with the following statement,

> O you who are ambitious to ascertain the truth. In these *Remarks and Admonitions*, I have explained the principles and generalities of *ḥikmah* to you. If you are guided by sagacity (*faṭānah*), it will be easy for you to subdivide them and work out the details.[953]

In another passage in *al-Ishārāt*, Ibn Sīnā also states that his expressions regarding the fundamental principles of *ḥikmah* speak only to the divinely-endowed/gifted intellectuals.[954] Similarly, he closes *al-Ishārāt* by saying that, in this work, he has presented the crème of the truth (*zubdat al-ḥaqq*) and the best pieces of *ḥikmah* (*qafiyy al-ḥikam*) to his reader in subtle expressions (*fī laṭāi'f al-kalim*). In return, Ibn Sīnā expects from his reader that he is to protect this truth from the ignorant (*jāhilūn*), the vulgar (*mubtadhalūn*), those who were not given sharpness of mind, skill

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[952] Goichon, "Ibn Sīnā".

[953] Ibn Sīnā, *al-Ishārāt wa-al-tanbīhāt*, ed. Sulaymān Dunyā (Cairo, 1960) I: 165.

[954] Ibid., II: 147.

and habit, those who are excessively engaged with commoners, and from those who lack philosophical nature and taste. Instead, Ibn Sīnā continues, his reader is to teach this truth gradually to those who have trustworthy, pure hearts and good conduct, namely, those who are capable of philosophical inquiry; his reader is also to make an agreement with such reliable persons on following the same path with respect to teaching the truth to other people. Finally, Ibn Sīnā warns his reader that if he divulges or loses this truth, God will be the arbitrator between them.[955]

Given such remarks, which have wide-ranging implications, I find a simple designation of "Aristotelianism" as falling in various respects short of a complete description of Ibn Sīnā's philosophical activities. In addition to his works in accordance with the mainstream Peripatetic tradition, he authored symbolic writings like *Ḥayy b. Yaqẓān*, *Risālat al-Ṭayr*, and *Salāmān wa-Absāl*, throughout which Ibn Sīnā uses figurative language and the image of the "East" as the place of light. It was this same image that influenced Suhrawardī's articulation of illuminationist philosophy. Furthermore, in the extant part of *al-Falsafah al-Mashriqiyyah*, Ibn Sīnā clearly expresses his disagreement with the Peripatetic philosophers, as he finds some of their arguments incomplete and erroneous. In this regard, he acknowledges Aristotle's own authority in philosophy and describes the latter as the person who discovered the truth of many subjects and systematized the philosophical sciences. Ibn Sīnā criticizes, however, those who followed Aristotle on the basis of the argument that they were not able to improve Aristotle's discussions by way of mending the cracks found in his structure and of completing his incomplete arguments. Instead, Ibn Sīnā says, they conservatively and

[955] Ibid., IV: 161-164.

fanatically repeated Aristotle's writings, without understanding the essence of his thought. Ibn Sīnā portrays himself as the undertaker of this project, which he carried out in his writings in line with the prevailing Peripatetic method, i.e., *al-Shifā'*. To this end, he benefited from his God-given exceptional intellectual capacity and from non-Greek sources, from which he gained knowledge. Ibn Sīnā further states that he discovered many faults of the Greek Peripatetics, but overlooked them in his aforementioned works to make his arguments more appealing and acceptable to them.[956] As for *al-Falsafah al-Mashriqiyyah*, he says,

> We have composed this book to explain the truth only for ourselves, i.e., for those who are like ourselves. As for the commoners who are interested in this matter (philosophy), in the *Kitāb al-Shifā'* we have provided for them more than they need. And we will present soon in the supplement whatever is suitable for them beyond that which they have seen so far. In all conditions we seek the assistance of God alone.[957]

This statement evidently places Ibn Sīnā's position outside the mainstream Peripatetic philosophers. It does not prove, however, that he radically separates himself from Aristotle's own philosophy; rather, it only proves that he does not consider Aristotle's followers to be competent in understanding their master's philosophy. To this extent I find reasonable Gutas' description of Ibn Sīnā's philosophy as Aristotelian. But what I find insufficient in Gutas' argument is that he does not explicitly discuss and nuance the nature of Ibn Sīnā's Aristotelianism. Ibn Sīnā clearly states that he wrote *al-Shifā'* for "commoners", meaning Peripatetic philosophers, while he wrote *al-Falsafah al-Mashriqiyyah* for another group of thinkers, whoever they might be. He further underlines that in addition to the existence of some "incomplete" arguments, Aristotle's philosophy contains certain "cracks" to be mended. And, more interestingly, Ibn Sīnā

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[956] Ibn Sīnā, *Manṭiq al-Mashriqiyyīn*, 19-22.

[957] Ibid., 22.

expresses openly that he benefited from "non-Greek" sources in articulating *al-Falsafah al-Mashriqiyyah*. Therefore, Gutas' explanation of the difference between Ibn Sīnā's two kinds of philosophical writings as merely "stylistic" does not seem to be a comprehensive argument, but rather a reductionist one. Moreover, Ibn Sīnā's corpus of symbolic writings indicates that his mind was also busy with non-Peripatetic thoughts, or more particularly with the East, the place of light. Consequently, Ibn Sīnā's Aristotelianism was not an unconditional membership in Aristotle's philosophical school.[958]

In this context, one might also remember Ibn Sīnā's discussions on Sufism in the last part of his *al-Ishārāt*, where he deals with three main questions: joy and happiness (*bahjah wa-sa'ādah*),[959] the stations of the knowers (*maqāmāt al-'ārifīn*),[960] and the secrets of signs (*asrār al-āyāt*).[961] This part is full of symbolic statements in a brief and ambigious language, which is evidently different from his style in his works written in the format of the conventional Peripatetic method. As noted above, Ibn Sīnā intentionally embraces this form of writing to express his thoughts, a fact acknowledged traditionally by later leading Muslim intellectuals through their lengthy commentaries on *al-Ishārāt*, especially by Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī (d. 606/1210) and Naṣir al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 673/1274). By bringing this work again to the discussion, I do not claim that it should be considered a typical Sufi document, nor do I argue that Ibn Sīnā was a practicing Sufi

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[958] In this regard, I agree with Marmura's argument when he says, "There is little reason to suppose that the lost part of this work [*al-Ḥikmah al-Mashriqiyyah*] contains views not found in Avicenna's known writings. The available data indicates that in this work he [Avicenna] intends to express his own thoughts even when this means disagreement with prevalent peripatetic view." Marmura, "Plotting the Course of Avicenna's Thought," 335.

[959] Ibn Sīnā, *al-Ishārāt wa-al-tanbīhāt* IV: 7-46.

[960] Ibid., IV: 47-110.

[961] Ibid., IV: 111-164.

himself, however respectful his statements might be.[962] Rather, I am trying to reemphasize the fact that Ibn Sīnā was an encyclopedic scholar and independent intellectual interested in almost every kind of science practiced in his lifetime, ranging from Peripatetic philosophy, physics, medicine, mathematics, music, astronomy, and politics to metaphysics, ethics, Qur'anic exegesis, and Sufism. Establishing himself in such wide-ranging scholarship, Ibn Sīnā seemed to be in quest of truth by any means possible. It is in this regard that I find Gutas' description of Ibn Sīnā's entire philosophical corpus as Aristotelian with some minor stylistic dissimilarities unpersuasive.

Ibn Sīnā's autobiography indicates that he was a very independent thinker. He makes use of the writings of previous philosophical authorities, including and especially those of Aristotle, but he is not inclined merely to repeat their arguments; instead, he examines them minutely, refines them in accordance with his own personally worked out thought, and presents his own discussions. This independence was built, at the same time, on a traditional education in Islamic scholarly disciplines, including memorizing the Qur'an, studying Arabic language and literature, and training in jurisprudence. His education in philosophy started with his overhearing the discussions of Ismā'ilī propagandists in whose teachings his father was interested. As for his serious philosophical study, it began under al-Nāṭilī, though it did not last for a long time due to Ibn Sīnā's exceptional sharpness in learning the materials, as well as al-Nāṭilī's limited

[962] It is noteworthy to mention that, on a more popular plane, Ibn Sīnā is frequently affiliated with Sufism, especially with Abū Sa'īd al-Khayr (d. 440/1049). It is said that the two would meet and talk about their psychological and epistemological experiences. On one occasion, it is narrated, Abū Sa'īd described Ibn Sīnā's arguments saying, "all that he knows, I see," to which Ibn Sīnā answered, "all he sees, I know." J. Houben, "Avicenna and Mysticism," *Avicenna Commemoration Volume* (Calcutta, 1956): 207.

knowledge of philosophical disciplines. After this introductory study with al-Nāṭilī, Ibn Sīnā was basically alone in his intellectual progress, and apart from his struggle with grasping the contents and purpose of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, he proceeded straightforwardly. It was only with the help of al-Fārābī[963] that he overcame that difficulty. According to Ibn Sīnā's statement, throughout his individual study of philosophical sciences, he did not apparently feel himself that much "alone", for whenever a problem would baffle him, he used to go to the mosque and worship, praying humbly to God until He opened the mystery of that problem to him and made things easy for him.[964] Therefore, in Ibn Sīnā's view, philosophy is not a completely secular discipline, having nothing to do with religion. In fact, one can describe the whole enterprise of Ibn Sīnā as a philosophical attempt to establish the existence of God, His unity, and His relation to beings. Ibn Sīnā is properly regarded as the "philosopher of being", but again, one should be mindful that, in Ibn Sīnā's understanding, the most complete and perfect "being" is God, on Whose existence every other being is dependent. Furthermore, through his theory of prophethood as an institution in general and in the case of Muḥammad in particular, Ibn Sīnā attempts to provide a philosophical ground for fundamental religious notions.[965] He thus seeks the knowledge of the truth by any means possible. Consequently, Ibn Sīnā's case, too, fits well into my argument that, in their

[963] It is not clear to which work of al-Fārābī Ibn Sīnā is referring in his autobiography. It is not that likely that he is referring to the abovementioned *Fī Aghrāḍ mā ba'd al-ṭabī ah*, but rather to *Kitāb al-Ḥurūf*, which is composed according to the system found in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. Otherwise the *Aghrād* that we physically possess today is a very short text containing little more than a table of contents of the *Metaphysics*. It could hardly be the book which so decisively influenced Ibn Sīnā. See Gohlman's note on this issue in Ibn Sīnā, *Autobiography*, ed. and trans. William E. Gohlman (*The life of Ibn Sīnā*) (Albany, 1974): 122.

[964] Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah, 437-438.

[965] For this topic see, Ibn Sīnā, *Risālah fī Ithbāt al-Nubuwwāt*.

inquiries, Muslim philosophers thought that their efforts to attain the truth were in harmony with the Qur'anic notion of *ḥikmah*, which was to be sought everywhere and by any decent means.

Just as it was in the case of al-Kindī and al-Fārābī before him, Ibn Sīnā's philosophical inquiries should be seen as intellectual efforts to attain the knowledge of the absolute, though Ibn Sīnā presents his discussions with better scholarly systematization and linguistic clarification. Otherwise, all three of these philosophical figures strive to solidify their systematizations in two main philosophical disciplines, namely, metaphysics and logic. They think that it is metaphysics that formulates the knowledge of being in general and of God in particular, and that logic is the universal tool for this knowledge.

In conclusion, Ibn Sīnā and his predecessors in Islamic philosophy regarded themselves as custodians of truth or *ḥikmah*, which had a long history of representatives in human history. They clearly acknowledged and appreciated the contributions of previous thinkers – regardless of their ethnic and religious backgrounds – for the philosophical advancement of mankind, which, in their view, was as much cumulative and cooperative as corrective and progressive. They considered this activity to be the everlasting intellectual effort to attain the knowledge of the true natures of all things insofar as is possible for man, and then to make use of this knowledge for improving the this-worldly condition of the human race. It was in this context of *ḥikmah* that they welcomed the Greek philosophical heritage, on which they worked conscientiously to deal with the perennial philosophical problems of mankind, but in a more elaborate and refined philosophical system. They clearly did not see themselves as passive recipients

of the ideas of Greek thinkers whose arguments they merely wanted to repeat. In this connection, one might think of the minute philosophical discussions of the earliest Muslim philosophers to introduce a comprehensive metaphysical system to prove the existence of God. One might also remember their meticulous intellectual efforts to accomodate the institution of prophethood and revelation within their philosophical system.

It is true that there has always been a cultural and religious tendency in Muslim societies to maintain that Islam is self-sufficient and that the Qur'an and Ḥadīth contain all the religious and moral truth necessary for mankind. As one would expect, our Muslim philosophers too faced this challenge and took the social realities of their current situations into consideration throughout their philosophical writings. At the same time, however, they did not see this idea as an essentialist challenge, but rather a contextual one. They sought rigorously for truth wherever it might be found, as the Prophet of Islam instructed his followers to do. Paradoxically, it was the conception of *ḥikmah* found in the very same Qur'an and Ḥadīth that provided for Muslim philosophers the necessary inspiration, as well as protection, to do their work.

CONCLUSION

The dissertation has examined the concept of *ḥikmah* in the cross-disciplinary context of early Muslim scholarly works. It has centered on the notion of *ḥikmah* in these writings in its particular relation to other epistemological concepts found in the Qur'an, including *'ilm* (knowledge), *ma'rifah* (gnosis), *'aql* (intellect), *qalb* (heart), and *fiqh* (comprehension). In chapter one, I investigated the lexicographical meanings of the Arabic root *ḥ-k-m*, from which the word *ḥikmah* is derived as a noun, and then analyzed the terminological meanings of *ḥikmah* in the works of Muslim authorities on the technical vocabulary of Islamic disciplines. I closed the chapter with a survey of the current situation in western scholarship on the meaning of *ḥikmah* and reviewed the limited amount of existing related writings in this respect. In that chapter, against the prevailing argument in the field ascribing the sense of "wisdom" to the Arabic word *ḥikmah* only through later borrowings from other Semitic languages, I have documented that *ḥikmah* had something to do with "wisdom" in Arabic as well, at least as far as the attestations from the younger pre-Islamic and early Islamic materials are concerned, as Arabic lexicographers present a quite wide-ranging and inclusive definition of *ḥikmah* implying the sense of "wisdom" in Arabic as well. As for the original meaning of *ḥikmah* in the sense of "wisdom" in the ancient pre-Islamic Arabic in comparison with other Semitic languages, I have said that considering the limited amount of the presently available linguistic materials and their lack of mentioning of *ḥikmah*, the question could not be solved conclusively, and needs further study in the context of comparative Semitic languages beyond merely Arabic and Islamic studies.

In chapter two, I have analyzed the word *ḥikmah* in each Qur'anic instance within its own context using exegetical discussions presented by early Muslim commentators. I have treated *ḥikmah* together with its relational semantic components in the Qur'an, and discussed the nature of the diverse interpretations provided by forefathers of *tafsīr* literature. I have contextualized *ḥikmah* according to whom it is attributed in the Qur'an. I have pictured a concentric understanding of *ḥikmah* by early commentators ascribing *ḥikmah* in its complete and perfect form to God, and then in a lesser degree of perfection to His Messengers, to His meritorious servants, and even further outside to whomever He wills. I have also discussed interdisciplinary elements of *ḥikmah* in *tafsīr* works deriving information from across the spectrum of Islamic writings, which is a point commonly neglected by contemporary writers on the meaning of *ḥikmah* in early Muslim exegetical works. Furthermore, I have argued that giving a single-word definition of *ḥikmah* throughout the entire Qur'anic text subjects our reading to only a partial understanding of this concept and thus mispresents it. Diverse interpretations and multiple meanings of *ḥikmah* in the Qur'an do not necessarily point to inconsistency or contradiction among the different understandings; rather, they are complementary to one other, as the Prophet recommended to his followers in their approach in understanding of the Qur'an.

In chapter three, I have examined *ḥikmah* in early Sufi writings with a particular focus on its semantic connotations in relation to *'ilm*, *ma'rifah*, *'aql*, *qalb*, and *fiqh*. This examination has included an analysis of *ḥikmah* within the contextual formulations of early Sufi exegetical works, as well as an attempt to elucidate the modes of perception and motivation of the early Muslim mystics with respect to *ḥikmah* as these modes are recorded in Sufi texts. I have thus contextualized their conception of *ḥikmah* within a

network of associated concepts. I have also noted that the earliest Sufi figures' treatment of *ḥikmah* is as much an epistemological concept as a practical or applied notion, because they argued that *ḥikmah* cannot be understood and actualized properly without this aspect and that *ḥikmah* ought to be put into action, not merely into speech. In other words, they view *ḥikmah* together with other related mystical concepts as a representation of an overall approach to this-worldly life and things, for they argue that as long as the acts of a knowledgeable person do not conform to his words, he does not deserve to be called *'ālim*, and that as long as *'ilm* does not result in certain practical manifestations such as humbleness, forbearance and moral scrupulousness, merely seeking after it as a mental activity does not conform to basic Islamic intellectual principles. They consider practical notions to be starting points, without which one cannot reap the epistemological rewards. In this regards, early Sufis underscore that true knowledge leads to sound belief (*īmān*), which is coupled frequently in the Qur'an with righteous deeds (*a'māl ṣāliḥah*). They thus see knowledge and action reciprocally dependent and even call those who separate the two "the scholars of evil", as on the authority of Jesus, al-Makkī relates,

> The likeness of the scholars of evil (*'ulamā' al-sū'*) is a rock that has fallen into the mouth of a river (*fam al-nahr*). The rock does not imbibe the water, but does not leave it to get to the field either. Likewise is the [case of the] scholars of this world; they remain sitting down [as opposed to moving forward] on the way of the Hereafter. Such scholars are not able to reach people, but they do not leave them to pursue their journey to God either.[966]

In early Sufi works, *ḥikmah* appears as a magnificent heavenly gift given to only a small number of distinguished servants of God, but it is simultaneously an immense responsibility placed on the shoulders of its recipients. Those who have been rewarded with *ḥikmah* ought to speak and act meticulously in accord with this exclusive treatment.

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[966] Al-Makkī, *Qūt* I: 293.

They are not to give it carelessly to undeserving people, because according to Muslim mystics, *ḥikmah* is a very noble thing that is not to be given to anybody on the basis of his family, social standing, wealth or physical qualities; rather, they argue, God grants *ḥikmah* only to His sincere and morally scrupulous servants who are completely devoted to the service of truth in every manner, in word as well as in deed.

Throughout my investigation of *ḥikmah* and other related concepts in the writings of early Sufis and their frequent references to the Qur'anic statements, I have presented further textual attestations to Massignon's arguments on the Islamic origin of Sufism. I have also called attention to the difficulty with applying conventional objective and analytical scholarly methods to Muslim mystical writings because of their distinctive epistemological theory that describes knowledge in an individualistic, experiential and existential manner. In their view, the real knowledge of everything, including *ḥikmah*, is not a matter of rational "knowing", but existential "being"; or to put it another way, *ḥikmah* is a process of knowing. They introduce gradational explanations of these notions based on the spiritual stations (*maqāmāt*) in question. In their terminology, mystical notions are multivalent or polysemous terms that contain several meanings as well as levels of meaning. Not only, for instance, do they define *ḥikmah* variously depending on the context, they also talk about levels of meaning. Such an exclusive theory of knowledge ultimately considers knowledge to be a sort of individual "taste" or "intuitive perception" (*dhawq*) and does not authorize uninitiated persons to test or describe the findings (*wujud*) of advanced Sufis. I have confronted this challenge with general principles outlined by the same Sufis for a proper understanding of Qur'anic statements, against arbitrary and baseless interpretations. I have further discussed other

means of knowledge introduced by Sufis, which move beyond the merely reason-oriented epistemologies of Muslim theologians and philosophers. In the example of their concept of "heart" (*qalb*) in the cases of al-Nūrī and al-Tirmidhī, I have elaborated Sufis' mention of various divisions of the human organs of perception and their different functions which go far beyond the limitations assigned to them by theologians and philosophers.

In chapter four, I have investigated *ḥikmah* in the writings of early Muslim philosophers. I have elaborated their reception and perception of philosophy in relation to the prophetic institution in general, and to Islamic *ḥikmah* as it is mentioned in the primary Muslim authoritative scriptures in particular. I have noted an underlying idea in Muslim intellectual circles in favor of encouraging the search for *ḥikmah*; this idea asserts that unlike the case of prophethood – the doors of which have been closed by God with the Prophet Muḥammad – the doors of *ḥikmah* has been kept unreservedly open until the Day of Resurrection. I have discussed similar inner formative forces that caused Muslim thinkers to become interested in philosophical inquiry, and their expectation from it.

Ibn Qutaybah's definition of *ḥikmah* as a combination of knowledge and action appears to be prevalent across the spectrum of Islamic disciplines in their formative period. One might even call this definition the *traditional* Islamic conception of *ḥikmah*, as it also echoes in the writings of early Muslim philosophers. They argue that philosophy combines theoretical virtues with practical ones; otherwise, they did not view it as idle speculation or the mere exercising of thought. Al-Fārābī, for instance, describes the knowledge of the theoretical sciences lacking the faculty for exploiting them for the

benefit of others as "defective philosophy (*falsafah nāqiṣah*)".[967] Likewise, Ibn Sīnā, in the context of explaining his perception of philosophy, clearly refers to the Qur'anic verse 2:269, in which those who are given *ḥikmah* are portrayed as being given much good.[968] Therefore, in their inquiries, the *falāsifah* thought that their efforts to attain such a sublime truth were in line and in harmony with the Qur'anic notion of *ḥikmah*, the search of which, moreover, was strongly recommended by the Prophet by any decent means possible.

This chapter has shown that the *falāsifah* view themselves as custodians of truth or *ḥikmah*. In their opinion, philosophical inquiry is the universal and everlasting search of mankind for truth. It is a cumulative intellectual progression of humankind and has an unbroken chain of representatives among every human generation throughout history up until its Islamic incarnation. They gratefully acknowledge the efforts of all previous philosophers to attain *ḥikmah* and call these attempts invaluable contributions to the intellectual advancement of mankind. Simultaneously, however, the *falāsifah* picture this history as a progressive and corrective tradition of intellectualizing eternal truth, which is *ḥikmah* again. They did not see themselves as passive recipients of the philosophers of the past; rather, they put themselves in charge of improving the intellectual legacy of the past, through completing their statements, mending the flaws of their systems, and perfecting their methods. The *falāsifah* envisioned and situated themselves as the representatives of this universal and everlasting intellectual tradition in their own times.

Attaining *ḥikmah*, according to Muslim philosophers, was the most prestigious achievement of humankind irrespective of ethnic or religious background. In this regard,

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[967] Al-Fārābī, *Taḥṣīl al-sa'ādah*, 39.
[968] Ibn Sīnā, *'Uyūn al-ḥikmah*, 64.

the dissertation has underscored a commonly overlooked, but in fact crucial, point in modern scholarship, that is to say, none of the earliest Muslim philosophical figures ascribe "philosophy" to a particular prophetic tradition, nor are they talking about a distinctively Islamic – as opposed to Christian or Jewish – philosophy, but only about a philosophy of mankind. The dissertation, therefore, offers a new perspective to contemporary studies on the writings of the *falāsifah* and attempts to build a more textual as well as methodological ground for the current controversial scholarly discussions on designating this intellectual heritage exclusively as "Arabic" or "Islamic".

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